

SALT POISONING

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Common table salt (Sodium Chloride) known in Homœopathy as *Natrum Muriaticum* plays a very important part in human economy. In raw state it is used as medicine and food. It has the property to absorb water and maintain a stable equilibrium among the tissues of the body. It is only one of the minerals which must be taken into the body regularly. Mineral matter is an essential part of all the tissues of the body-salt is needed for all the organs, every little cell in the body, as iron is needed for the blood, phosphorous for the nervous system and calcium for the teeth and bone.

In Ayurveda it is used in many ways and in various ailments, the chief use of it is as an ingredient in digestive medicine.

Allopaths use it in cholera, and in salt depletion of children which results in sunken fontanelles, wrinkled skin and cramps of muscles etc. It is also used as a gargle.

Turing to Homœopathy : when salt is potentized, a powerful energy is generated of which great Homœopathic Prescribers have highly spoken of. It is a "polychrest among polychrests" says Dr. N. M. Chowdhury. Dr. Nash in his *Leaders* says, under *Natrum Muriaticum* "I have given more space to this remedy and to *Lachesis* and *Causticum* than to most other remedies for the following reasons : They are more efficient in high potencies, they are not appreciated by general profession and I have found that those who value the three remedies are generally good homœopathic prescribers".

So far we have dealt with salt as used in medicine. We shall now see how it works in food. Its demand in our body economy is so great and hunger for it is so persistent that it is no wonder our ancient people would travel long distances to fetch sea-water for converting it into salt to add flavour and taste to their foods.

As salt adds a particular flavour and taste to food we eat

it. It forms a constant item in our daily diet, but in ancient times people necessarily kept within bounds the use of salt in food.

But time has changed and with the advance of civilization, people have full play with their dishes. A large number of different salted niceties is listed, prepared and served in our daily food. No check is put on salt consumption and as a result salt-poisoning is consequence.

Here we are not drawing from imagination the ill-effect of too much of salt eating. We shall let great Homœopaths speak on the subject.

Dr. Constantine Hering says, "It is a great error to suppose that salt is absolutely wholesome and that too much of it can be eaten. A small quantity suffices to make food palatable, and in wholesome, but the excessive consumption of it, indulged in by many, is not only unnecessary but even attended by great danger to the health. It causes dyspepsia, constipation, chronic catarrh, skin diseases etc., and many persons labouring under these affections owe them solely to the immoderate use of this otherwise indispensable condiments."

Dr. Hering is not alone. Dr. Boericke writes in the introductory para of Natrum Mur in his *Materia Medica*?—"The prolonged taking of excessive salt causes profound nutritive changes to take place in the system and there arise not only the symptoms of salt retention as evidenced by dropsies and œdemas, but also an alteration in the blood causing a condition of anæmia and leucocytosis. There seems also to be a retention in the tissues of effete materials giving rise to symptoms loosely described as gouty or rheumatic gout."

Dr. Ellis Barker writes "Salt poisoning is very frequent among the civilized. Many patients admit that they take about a table spoonful of salt per day, have a half tea-spoonful with their egg etc. The salt poisoned (person) have watery blood, always feel chilly; they have dry noses, mouth, dry bowels and consequent upon constipation they have backache, relieved by hard pressure".

Dr. Burnett in his book on cataract says "that not a few of the cases of cataract that we have met with are more or

less due to the fact that the patient had been in the habit of partaking of too much salt with their food or in their food or perhaps even as a saline water."

Extensive extracts has been given from the accepted authority to show the insidious nature of the poisoning by excessive use of salt.

Even breathing of salt-laden air of sea for a short time produces effects upon health, such as sea-side neuralgia, sea-side headache, marine cachexia. Dr. J. W. Krichban writing of his personal experiences of ill-effect of salt-water trips said that whenever he made a trip on sea he became sick, his digestion was upset and urine became scanty. This tendency of his was cured with *Nat. Mur. c.m.*

We have written so far on the insidious nature of poisoning by salt. What then will be the symptoms of its poisoning? From the quotation given above, its bad effects on the system are given; others can be gathered from *Materia Medica*. The clearcut picture of a patient is given here.

A friend of the writer was very fond of taking salt, so much so that whenever invited to any dinner he would take sufficient quantity of salt over and above what was given in dishes. Sometimes ago he related to me that he had become irritable and disliked tea, meat and tobacco. His mouth frothed along the edges. His throat felt dry and he had unquenchable thirst. His constipation was great. He felt very badly in the sun, specially in summer, detestable trouble was that he sweated while he ate. He did not feel well at noon.

The writer did not take any heed of his complaints as he had no faith in "tiny pills." But on repeated asking and in order to avoid vexation, *Nat. Mur. 200* was prescribed on his habit of taking too much of salt and his history of taking quinine for sometime. The writer little expected that he would take the medicine. When the writer met him next, he told the writer that he took by them three doses, and by its use most of the symptoms were disappearing. But he added that he spit satish.sputum. The writer told him that it was a good sign as his system was throwing off excess salt, *Nat. Mur.* proved effective in his case.

Craving for salt in a patient is not an unfailing symptom for prescribing *Nat. Mur* and there will be many failures if the totality of symptoms are not adhered to. It is so misleading that many good prescribers were led into this error. Dr. N. Puddephatt reports a case of a patient who had Dermatitis. On the strength of four vaccinations and several inoculations plus aggravations from damp, worse at height, eating a terrific amount of salt, he prescribed *Thuja*. The patient was improving, but he changed the prescription to *Nat. Mur* with no effect. Says he "Permit me to make my humble confession, for at that time I must have been suffering from a black-out or I had "craving for salt" on the brain, for I changed the remedy and sent him *Nat. Mur* which proved useless. Yet I know that *Thuja* has craving for salt I cannot for the life of me think what I was about" (H. Gleanings—December, 1958). The case was cured with *Thuja*.

Fortunately Homœopathy has a number of medicines to antidote the effect of abuse of salt. Dr. Boericke gives, *Ars.* ; *Carbo V.* ; *Nat. M.* ; *Nit. Sp. d* ; *Phos.* The last two medicines are in italics. Dr. Barker has suggested *Nat. Mur* and *Phos* as antidotes.

It may be added here that Dr. Kent in his repertory under the rubric "Desires salt things" gives the following remedies :—

Arg-n, *Carbo-v*, *Lac-c*, *Nat-mur*, *Phos* and *Verat* in *bold type* showing off indicated remedies.

Aloes, *Calc*, *Cal-p*, *Causticum*, *Con*, *Cor-r*, *Lyc*, *Manc*, *Med*, *Nit-ac*, *Tarent* in italics *suggesting next in importance*.

Atro, *Cal-s*, *Meph*, *Merc-i-f*, *Plb*, *Sanic*, *Sel*, *Sulph*, *Teucr*, *Thuja*, *Tub* in *ordinary type*.

In passing it may be pointed out that salt is discouraged in aged persons, chronic Diarrhoea, Jaundice, skin diseases and Blood Pressure and totally prohibited in Albuminuria and œdema.