

The Dangerous Years

by William Esser, N.D., D.C.

Editor's note: From its founding in 1948 and until 1970, the American Natural Hygiene Society (now called the National Health Association) held annual conventions at major hotels around the country. Thousands of people were exposed for the first time to the benefits of an uncompromising, whole-foods, plant-based diet as an integral part of a healthy lifestyle. The cost of those conventions was partially underwritten through the generosity of members whose contributions and advertisements produced special convention programs in which major articles on the Natural Hygiene health program were written by the leaders of the Society, including the legendary Drs. Shelton, Esser, Gross, and others. The following powerful article appeared in the 1964 convention program and was authored by ANHS co-founder, Dr. William Esser. We think you will find Dr. Esser's words to be as timely and insightful today as they were over 52 years ago.

Every childhood disease, so common and so commonly expected in the medical concept of health and disease, is a danger signal, a warning that the body's requirements for good health are not being met.

The adolescent whose well-being is disturbed by monthly discomfort and pain, for whom headaches are frequent experiences and whose skin flowers with unsightly eruptions may correctly assume that with each of these symptoms he is being warned. Distress signals from the digestive tract too, with concomitant constipation, already well established by twelve or fourteen years of unintelligently managed child life, are also frequently part of adolescent life and may be considered persistent warnings from an overworked alimentary tract.

Young parents, who do not find their encounter with marriage and its responsibilities the paradisiacal voyage on a calm sea they had envisioned, may find upon investigation that the reason for much marital unhappiness may stem directly from sickness; sickness in their own bodies, or illness in their children. Sickness of any kind should be interpreted as a warning. Causes must be sought and rooted out if a return to normal is to be expected.

From the foregoing, one may assume that there may be dangerous years at any age if Hygienic laws have been violated. However, the truly dangerous time of life, though this will vary individually, is usually sometime after forty years of age. It is at this stage in life, that the sum total of physiological abuse begins to make manifest by major breakdowns within the body. Normally, the body has enormous reserves and a capacity to withstand stress and over-indulgence. The architect and engineer, in planning a

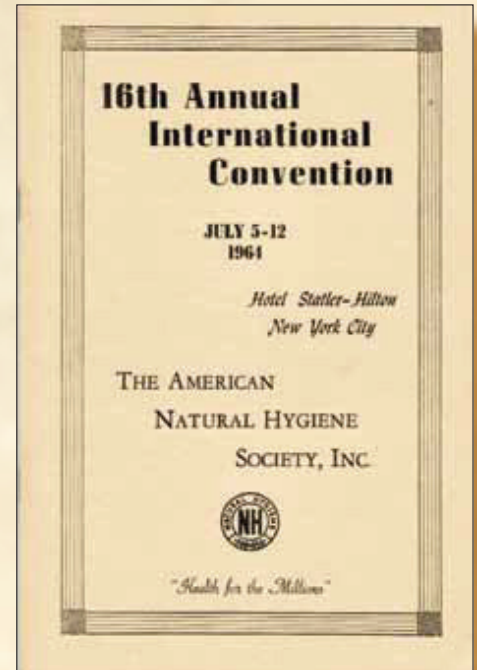
bridge or building, generally allows a two to four hundred percent margin of safety to compensate for unusual periods of stress, when extraordinarily heavy traffic passes over a bridge in an emergency, or when a hurricane lashes its fury on a building which would collapse were it not for such added capacity for resistance.

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deprivation and brutality of the prison camp are a good example of this. These circumstances are fortunately not common to all of us, yet most of us subject our bodies to abuses just as severe and damaging, and do so repeatedly.

Daily, the digestive system is expected to handle from two to three times its normal capacity of food, the nature of which is as foreign to its natural requirements as it would be for the farmer to feed his cows steaks, French fries, apple pie, and a few buckets of beer or wine with which to wash it down.

Many expect their lungs to inhale dangerous gases and





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smoke each day when the respiratory system was never meant to deal with anything but clean air, rich in oxygen so necessary for the replenishment of the body's needs every few seconds throughout life.

These two suicidal practices alone would be enough to destroy a body were it not for the inherent strength with which it is endowed. Throughout life, abuses of every nature are daily heaped upon the organism while it bends to its burdens, feverishly setting matters right as physiological chemistry is disturbed, in order to maintain optimum health. When tissues are damaged and organs impaired, a forced rest may be induced until healing has been completed. Emergencies are met with dispatch, and the individual is able to return to his daily routine.


The marvelous capacity to meet situations as they arise, and to permit one to resume normal activity, does not last to the same degree as one grows older. It is during the dangerous years that it becomes apparent that the return to normal comes more slowly: wounds heal, but require a longer period of time; colds linger longer; and the old "bounce" isn't as bouncy. Stealthy pains come and go

and come again to remain longer, eventually coming home to roost and taking up their permanent residence as unwelcome guests. Painful joints, constant nervousness and fatigue, digestion accompanied by gases and pain, these are the growing manifestations of a body driven too far by errors of living. Functions slacken more and more until finally one organ (or several) become so impaired that they can no longer maintain their equilibrium, thereby upsetting physiological integrity. At this stage, diabetes, splenic involvement nephritis, or a serious breakdown of the nervous system may occur. Perhaps one of the most important glands in the body fails in its duties, causing burdensome obesity, or perhaps a disturbance of the emotional balance, as a result.

Finally, when causes are not replaced by positive measures of health, permanent and irrevocable crippling of the nervous system, the cardio-vascular system, the skeletal structure, or some vital organ occurs. Life at this stage becomes a tedious, undesirable existence causing burdensome dependence on family, friends, or the cold, impersonal (and expensive) ministrations of a nursing home attendant.

No one in his younger years ever expects to spend the last ten or twenty years of life invalidated in such a way. Yet, if habits inimical to life and health are practiced in earlier years, disease and dependent old age become inevitable.

All of life should be lived according to Hygienic principles. In general, however, the great majority, through ignorance or carelessness, upon reaching the dangerous years are reaping plentifully the burdens of their violations. Assuming that the reader has not "incurable" disease, and that he is moderately ratiocinative [of rational thinking], he can add many healthy years to his life free from pain and suffering. The simple regime outlined by Natural Hygiene, supplying the conditions necessary for the restoration and maintenance of health, will assure an excellent degree of well-being for the remainder of one's life.

Every man prefers good health to bad. Few, however, are discriminating enough to want and strive for optimal health. Pushing life's resources to the very limit and failing to recognize the danger signals can only result in the establishment of an irreversible condition. 

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