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Mary A. Dolve

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Constipation

MARY A. DOLVE, Extension Specialist

THE IMPORTANCE TO HEALTH of a regular and proper evacuation of the bowels is a recognized fact. Faulty diet, irregular habits, imperfect exercise and too little water are causes of constipation which can be avoided. It is easier to prevent than to cure but the measures for prevention will also effect a correction in a good many cases. No other trouble that is as significant to the individual as constipation is so easily prevented and sometimes overcome by factors that can be controlled. Yet the extensive use of cathartics and laxatives indicates that the public is rather careless or indifferent in keeping the body normal in this respect.



Causes of Constipation All Can Avoid

I. Poor Food Habits.—Constipation is often caused by a diet which leaves too little undigested matter. This is the natural stimuli to peristalsis which causes the material to be moved forward in the intestines. When natural foods such as whole cereals leave a considerable residue, it should not be regarded as waste but as a natural physiological necessity and therefore normal. It is a natural result that intestines, which are deprived of the necessary material on which to work when completely digestible foods are used in excess, should reduce in size and lose to a certain degree their natural functions. This helps to lay the foundation for chronic constipation.

Using the food habit score card as a guide for selection of foods and making sure that members of the family eat what is served will insure sufficient bulk or undigested material for good peristaltic action and natural laxative elements. (Score card referred to is the one used in the Meal Planning demonstration.)

II. Irregular Habits.—Another prevailing cause of constipation is retaining the contents of the colon for too long a time. The colon acts as a receptacle into which the contents of the small intestines are emptied and stay for a reasonable length of time before ejection. It is desirable that the expulsion of the stools take place regularly and as a rule at least once a day; twice a day is to be preferred.

Tardiness in ejecting the stools increases the difficulty, because the longer the food stays in the tract the more liquid is absorbed from it and the drier it becomes.

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The longer the food stays in the alimentary tract, the greater is the possibility for growth of bacteria causing putrefaction, because the place is favorably moist and warm.

Putrefaction will result in poisons that will form in larger amounts the longer the food is held in the tract and the more protein food is present. It is highly desirable, therefore, to guard against putrefaction by hastening the passage of food through the tract, and by reducing, at least temporarily, the amount of protein food.

During pregnancy, special care should be taken to eliminate intestinal poisons (toxins) because during this period the body is burdened with additional waste material of the growing fetus. The resulting pressure through encouraging constipation may also be responsible for increase of toxins at this time.

Habit is very important in regular and complete ejection of the stools. Therefore, children should be taught to go to the toilet the first thing in the morning and the last thing before going to bed. This habit, when fully established, is a big factor in keeping maximum health and the digestive tract in order. Irregularity not only tends to constipation but is inconvenient and often impossible to be properly attended to. Retaining the stools after the feeling for evacuation has been established promotes constipation which may result in other difficulties. The colon is naturally distended when the proper evacuation of the rectum is interfered with.

III. Too little water.—Not enough water to keep the food mass softened is another factor which causes a tendency toward constipation. Six to eight glasses of water, foods of high water content such as fruits, and vegetables and milk will keep conditions normal in this respect. Warm or hot water is to be preferred to ice water; cool water is all right especially between meals.

IV. Poor muscle tone of abdomen.—Muscle tone is also important both in prevention and correction of constipation. Many people have the idea that they secure sufficient exercise because they use their arms and legs in pursuit of their regular work. The muscles of the arm may be hard but the abdominal muscles very flabby. General exercise may not be sufficient; exercises that tone up the abdominal muscles are often the most effective way of overcoming constipation.

Cathartics

The purpose of cathartics is to increase the speed and ease of evacuation. Those causing violent action may be depressing to the digestive tract and hence promote constipation. Cathartics are an expedient and never a cure. Cathartics usually weaken rather than strengthen and therefore aggravate the condition rather than correct it. The use of cathartics should be directed by the physicians. Avoid the cathartic habit.

Cathartics differ in their action:

1. Stimulate the muscles to action by irritation.
2. Soften the stools; hence the muscles are relieved of some of the necessary action.
3. Increase the bulk of food material which provides material for muscles to work upon.
4. Some cathartics have more than one action.

Preventive and Corrective Measures

Adoption of one of the following measures may be sufficient to make corrections. Other cases may require attention of more or of all. Whatever measure adopted must become a habit to have any permanent effect. Some cases require the aid and directions of a physician.

Simple constipation is usually the result of the neglect of one or more of the necessary regular habits. Generally the digestive tract is a good one and will respond under favorable treatment. Do not expect normal response immediately if the cause is bad habits of long standing. A month's consistent effort should begin to show improvement and may undo years of careless habits.

Is Your Constipation Due to

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| I. Not drinking enough water? | III. Poor food habits? |
| II. No regularity of habit? | IV. Lack of proper exercise? |

There are, of course, types of constipation that can only be corrected by the physician. It is suggested that in all cases of long standing or where there is the slightest possibility of the ailment being caused by other than the factors mentioned and where the condition is more than that of simple constipation, the physician be consulted before any corrective measures are taken.

I. Water.—Drink six or eight glasses of water daily.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. On arising—hot or cold as preferred. | 4. At noon. |
| 2. At breakfast. | 5. Mid-afternoon. |
| 3. At about 10 o'clock. | 6. At supper. |
| | 7. At bedtime. |

II. Food.—Regular hours for eating establish a regularity in digestion that helps in establishing regular habits of elimination. Eating slowly, chewing food well and having "cheer and fun" with meals aid digestion.

For normal intestinal activities certain bulk, mineral salts and acids are necessary. To supply these use:



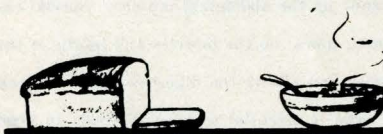
Two vegetables, including greens three times a week, besides potatoes every day.



Two fruits every day.



One of the fruits or vegetables should be raw or in the form of canned tomatoes.



About one-third of the cereals used should be whole cereals, whole grain bread or breakfast food.

Suggested Day's Dietary for Simple Constipation

Avoid tea and coffee as they are constipating in effect.

BREAKFAST

Fruit	Raw or cooked	{ Orange, grape fruit, apples, prunes, figs, dates, berries (except blackberries), canned or cooked dried fruits, any fruit in season
Cereal	{ Made from the whole grain—well cooked and served with cream	{ All dark colored cereals
Bread	{ Made from whole grain flour	{ Whole wheat toast or bread or muffins, graham bread or muffins, once in a while bran muffins
Beverage	No laxative quality	{ Milk or weak cocoa for children or adults. Cereal beverages are often laxative
Other foods	{ May be needed for additional nourishment but are not laxative	{ Ham, bacon, eggs, potatoes, cookies (molasses cookies are best)
Water—One or two glasses, but avoid using it to wash down improperly chewed foods.		

LUNCH OR SUPPER

Main dish	{ May not necessarily contain certain anti-constipating substances but should be accompanied with generous amounts of foods that do	{ Cheese dishes, eggs, milk soup, meat, etc
Vegetable or succulent dish	{ Generous servings	{ Fruit or vegetable salad, green beans, spinach or other greens, asparagus, cauliflower, tomatoes, etc.
Dessert	If served	Fruit, gingerbread, molasses cake or cookies
Water—One or two glasses, but avoid using it to wash down improperly chewed foods.		

DINNER

Meat or meat substitute	may or may not be served, depending on work or individual	{ Non-laxative along with it generous servings of laxative foods
Succulent dish	{ Generous serving of vegetable or succulent vegetables or both	{ Cabbage, carrots, turnips, onions, etc.
Bread	From whole grain flour	{ Whole wheat bread, graham bread, Oatmeal bread, bran muffins
Dessert	Fruit or whole cereal pudding	{ Fruit, raw or cooked, fruit sponge, graham date pudding, gingerbread with whipped cream
Water—One or two glasses, but avoid using it to wash down improperly chewed foods.		

NOTE.—If other difficulties are associated with constipation, it is still necessary to stimulate the intestinal activity but it must be done without irritating substances and of a type which will easily pass along the tract. The vegetables may be rubbed through a sieve; the whole grain cereals cooked to a jelly. The finely ground whole wheat flour should be used in place of graham flour or bran. In such cases, agar-agar may be used.

III. Regular Habits of Visiting Toilet.—There should be at least one complete evacuation during the day at a regular hour; twice is better. The best time is immediately before or after breakfast and upon retiring. Set a certain time and keep it. If there has been irregularity in this habit, do not become discouraged if results are not obtained at once. At first considerable time may have to be given but persistence in regularity as to time without haste will eventually bring results.

IV. Exercise, Etc.—If movement is difficult, assistance may be given by placing feet on a low stool or round of chair, keeping knees up, leaning forward and clasping knees with hands. This makes the muscles of the thighs tense.

Exercise, especially if taken in the open air, tends to improve the general conditions of the body and to improve the circulation and tone up the abdominal muscles. Special exercises should be taken night and morning.

A cool bath, shower or plunge, in the morning tones up the muscles and improves the circulation.

Poor posture weakens the abdominal muscles and allows the digestive organs to sag down and lose their tone.

Eight hours of sleep in a well ventilated room is essential to keep the body in good condition.

Daily Exercises for Constipation



1. **Position.**—Lie on back on floor or bed, with legs straight.

Movements.—1. Bend right knee quickly to chest. 2. Replace. 3. Repeat, bending left knee. Continue alternately, 10, 20 or 30 times.



2. **Position.**—Lie on back on floor or bed, with knees bent, feet resting on floor or bed, arms folded loosely across abdomen.

Movements.—1. Pull both knees to chest forcibly. 2. Replace. Repeat in groups of five, from 10 to 20 times.



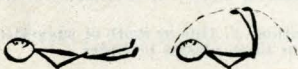
3. **Position.**—Lie on back on floor or bed, with knees bent, feet resting on floor.

Movements.—1. Inhale and contract abdomen. 2. Exhale and relax. Repeat, 10, 20 or 30 times.



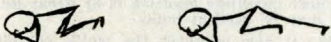
4. **Position.**—Lying on back on floor or bed with knees bent to chest.

Movement.—Circle legs, keeping knees bent—first to right, then to left. Repeat 5, 10, 20 times.



5. **Position.**—Lie flat on back on bed or floor.

Movements.—Raise both feet together slowly toward head, touching floor above head if possible. Repeat slowly 5 or 10 times.



6. **Treading.**

Position.—Kneel on floor with head resting on arms folded on floor.

Movements.—1. Stretch right foot back as far as possible (until knee is straight) letting back sag down.

2. Replace. 3. Repeat, left. Continue alternately 10, 20 or 30 times.

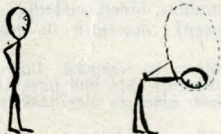


7. **Standing and Alternate Knee Bending.**

Position.—Stand with arms hanging at sides (or hands on hips), feet parallel, toes pointing forward.

Movements.—1. Bend right knee quickly to chest. 2. Replace.

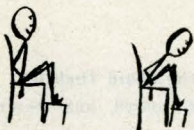
3. Repeat, bending left knee. Repeat 10, 20 or 30 times.



8. **Circling.**

Position.—Stand with hands on hips.

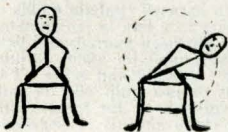
Movements.—Bend trunk forward to horizontal, back flat. Move trunk to left, upward to right, and downward, making circle (do not go backward or vertical in coming up). Repeat 5, 10, 20 times.



9. **Doubling Over.**

Position.—Sit on chair with feet resting on chair or bench 6 to 12 inches lower, with right arm resting across abdomen, left arm hanging at side.

Movement.—Bend forward quickly, pressing arm into abdomen and keeping knees together, 30 to 40 times.



10. **Stride Sitting, Trunk Circling.**

Position.—Sit astride on chair or stool, hands resting on "highs, better" forward, back flat.

Movements.—Move trunk to left, upward, to right, and downward, making complete circle. Continue without stopping, five times. Repeat, circling to right. Repeat, alternately from 10 to 20 times.

NOTE.—Exercises to be taken morning and night, after emptying the bladder.

11. Massage is of Value to Some.—With the palm of the hand apply gentle pressure in the lower right hand side of the abdomen. Carry the hand with continued pressure upward to diaphragm, then transversally across the abdomen and downward on the left side to a point opposite the beginning. The pressure should be firm but gentle and the movement continuous. This massage tends to carry the stools in the colon along the natural course of movement. In place of hand massage, roll a 3 to 5 pound leather covered cannon ball over abdomen.

Living up to requirements of the food habit score card will insure enough laxative foods under normal conditions and no doubt will secure results if adopted by one who has not been accustomed to this dietary. About one-half cup should be considered a serving of fruits and vegetables. If necessary, the vegetables and fruits may be served more often and in larger quantity. Bran or agar-agar may be added as temporary measures in some cases.

Buttermilk, sour milk dishes and saurkraut are beneficial because the acid aids in preventing intestinal putrefaction.

Daily Schedule

Upon Rising.—1. Visit toilet—for complete evacuation. 2. Take one or more of suggested exercises, breathing deeply (air will be fresh if window has been open during night). 3. Drink about 2 glasses of water, hot or cold. Half a lemon with no sugar is a desirable addition to water.

Dress quickly. Breakfast—(see suggestions). About ten—glass of water. Noon meal—(see suggestions). About three o'clock—one or more glasses of water. If possible, exercise in open air. Evening meal—(see suggestions).

Before Retiring.—1. Visit toilet—for complete evacuation. 2. One or more of suggested exercises, breathing deeply, in front of window. 3. One or more glasses of water.

Harmless Aids

When the habit of constipation is firmly established, even a correct diet will be unable to correct it for some little time. In such cases, the most harmless laxative is of great importance. The following are adjuncts to foods which may be used at home:

1. Bran is principally cellulose which gives bulk; it also contains the water soluble vitamin and some minerals. Bran will therefore help to restore the normal function of intestines which have become sluggish through too concentrated a diet. If whole cereals, fruits and vegetables are used, bran as such should not be necessary but in cases of chronic constipation it may have a place at least until normal functions are restored.

2. Agar-agar is a substance which has practically no food value but has the quality which enables it to absorb much moisture and swell up. This provides the intestines with the necessary bulk to excite peristalsis and is a good substitute for plant fibre such as is found in bran in cases where the intestines are sensitive or inflamed.

Ways of Taking Agar.—a. May be used in connection with bran or alone. To make it more palatable, the agar-agar and bran can be mixed and eaten with the addition of cream, salt or a small amount of sugar. b. Poured on the tongue and swallowed with aid of a little warm water.

Quantity.—A tablespoonful of bran or agar-agar three times a day before meals is about the right quantity for adults. The bran can be used in muffins, bread, puddings, etc.

3. Laxative Conserve.—One-third lb. prunes (pits removed); one-third lb. raisins (seeded); one-third lb. figs; one oz. senna leaves (in bag)

Boil prunes with the senna leaves just enough to allow pits to be removed. Cool and pass prunes with figs and raisins through food chopper. Thoroughly mix and pass again through chopper. Heat to boiling point with juice from prunes, place in sterilized quart jar and use at breakfast and supper (1 to 2 teaspoonfuls).

Remember that the above are only temporary means to relieve the distress caused by constipation until the conditions of the intestines become normal under the influence of a correct diet, regular habits, sufficient water, and proper exercise.

RECIPES

Vegetables

For additional vegetable and salad recipes, see Extension Circular No. 224, "Three Meals a Day"; Ex. Cir. No. 176 "For Vigorous Health, Fruits and Vegetables."

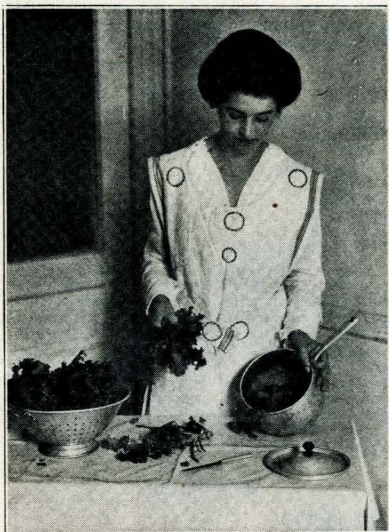
Beet Greens

Wash and clean young beets. Leave roots and tops together. Put them into a kettle with very little boiling water and allow them to cook until just tender. Salt the water just before cooking is completed. Drain. Serve hot with butter substitute or savory fat, salt and pepper, or with vinegar. They may also be cooked and chopped fine like spinach.

Spinach or Swiss Chard Timbales

1 cupful chopped, cooked, and seasoned spinach; 2 eggs.

Mix together the spinach and the yolks of the eggs. Fold in the stiffly beaten whites. Pour into greased timbale molds or custard cups. Place in a pan in which about a cupful of water has been poured, and bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for about 45 minutes or until set. Unmold and serve. Two cupfuls of carrot or pea pulp may be substituted for the spinach, or for tomato timbales, substitute three cupfuls of seasoned,



Greens of All Kinds are Especially Good

strained, canned tomatoes for the spinach and add three-fourths cupful of soft bread-crumbs. Any of these vegetable timbales may be served with a medium thick white sauce.

Vegetable Loaf

- 1/2 c. cooked green peas
- 1/2 c. cooked green string beans
- 1/2 c. chopped boiled carrots
- 1 1/2 c. milk
- 1 c. soft breadcrumbs
- 1/2 ts. salt
- 1/8 ts. pepper
- 1/2 ts. paprika
- 1 egg

Press peas through a sieve, cut beans in small pieces, then combine all vegetables. Add to them the milk, slightly beaten egg, crumbs and seasoning. Turn into an oiled baking dish and bake in a moderate oven until firm.

Vegetable Omelet

Use cooked left-over vegetables, one vegetable alone or two in combination. Mash the vegetables through a sieve, moisten with a little milk, cream or gravy, and season with salt and pepper. Spread the mixture lightly over the plain omelet before folding.

Salad Combinations

1. Cabbage, pineapple and coconut.
2. Carrot and shredded lettuce.
3. Prunes stuffed with cottage cheese.
4. Asparagus and tomato.
5. Canned pears and white cherries.

Spinach or Swiss Chard and Ham Salad

- 2 c. cooked spinach, fresh or canned
- 6 slices cold boiled ham
- any dressing desired
- lettuce leaves

Drain the spinach and season with salt, pepper and either vinegar or lemon-juice. Pack tightly in twelve small molds to cool. Place slices of cold boiled ham on lettuce leaves and place two molds of spinach on opposite sides of each slice of ham. Serve with dressing.

Cardinal Salad

- 2 large beets
- 2 tb. vinegar
- 1/2 c. wax beans
- 1/2 c. peas
- 1/2 c. asparagus tips
- mayonnaise made with vinegar from beets
- lettuce
- radishes for a garnish

Boil beets until tender, slice, cover with vinegar and let stand until the following day. Drain off the vinegar and use it in making the mayonnaise. Arrange white wax beans, peas, asparagus tips and red mayonnaise in little rose-like nests of lettuce leaves, and garnish with red radishes.

Desserts

Prune Ice Cream

- 1 c. prune-pulp
- 1 c. sugar
- juice 1 lemon
- juice 1 orange
- 1/8 ts. salt
- 1/2 c. milk
- 1 cup cream

Rub cooked prunes through a sieve, to obtain pulp. Add the remaining ingredients, cream last of all. Freeze.

Norwegian Prunes

- 1 oz. or 2 tb. granulated gelatin
- 1/2 c. cold water
- 1/2 c. boiling water
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 2 tb. lemon juice
- 1/2 lb. prunes
- 2 c. water
- cream

Wash the prunes, soak over night in the water and cook until tender in same water. Drain, reserving the liquid. Remove the stones and cut the prunes in quarters. Mix prune juice and pulp and add boiling water if necessary to make two cups. Chill and add lemon juice.

Soak gelatin in cold water. Add 1/2 c. boiling water and stir over hot water until thoroughly dissolved. Add sugar and stir until dissolved.

Add to prune pulp and juice. Pour into cold molds and let set in cool place. May be served with whipped or plain cream.

Prune Souffle

- 12 large prunes
- 3 egg whites
- 3 tb. powdered sugar

Soak prunes over night and stew in the same water until tender. Remove stones and mash to a smooth pulp. Beat the egg whites until stiff, fold in the sugar and then the prune pulp. Turn into a greased baking dish and bake in a slow oven about 20 minutes. Serve at once with cream, soft custard or any desired sauce.

Prune Corn Starch Pudding

- 3 tb. corn starch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cold prune juice
- 1 ts. cinnamon
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. hot pulp and juice made from cooking
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. prunes until tender
- 2 tb. lemon juice

Mix and cook as for corn starch blanc mange. Mold and cool. Serve with cream or lemon sauce.

Prune Bavarian

- 1 c. prune pulp
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. powdered sugar
- 1 c. whipped cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. vanilla

Beat the sugar into the pulp until smooth. Add the cream beaten stiff, folding in the prunes, flavor. Serve very cold. This may be frozen by placing in salt and ice for about three hours but it is delicious unfrozen. One tablespoonful of lemon juice may be added if desired. Sufficient for six servings of one-half cup each.

Fig-Raisin Pudding

- 3 c. fig pulp
- 1 c. seedless raisins
- 1 lemon-grated rind and juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. bran
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. water

Wash and drain dried figs; then run through the food chopper. Simmer until tender with the water, sugar, raisins, salt and bran. Add the other ingredients after making the flour into a paste with a little water; let boil two or three minutes and pour into individual molds. Serve cold with whipped or plain sweetened cream.

Bran Pudding

- 2 eggs
- 2 c. bran
- 2 c. sweet milk
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 tb. butter
- 1 c. seeded raisins

Soak the bran in the milk. Beat eggs and sugar; then add butter, bran and raisins. Bake in a moderate oven about twenty minutes until firm. Serve with cream or with hard sauce.

Parisian Sweets

Run through food chopper equal parts of figs, dates and raisins. Nuts may be added. May be made into balls or rolled in a sheet and cut into shapes. Roll pieces in sugar. Use as confection.

Quick Breads**Graham Muffins**

- 1 c. graham flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. sugar
- 3 ts. melted butter
- 1 ts. salt
- 1 c. milk
- 1 egg
- 5 ts. baking powder

Mix and sift the dry ingredients. Add the milk gradually, the well beaten egg and the

melted butter; bake in hot oven in oiled pans 25 minutes. Raisins may be added to this recipe if desired.

Bran Muffins

- 2 tb. shortening
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 c. sour milk
- 1 c. bran
- 1 c. flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. soda
- $\frac{1}{4}$ ts. salt
- 1 ts. baking powder

Cream shortening and sugar together, add the egg. Mix and sift flour, soda, salt, and baking powder. To the creamed mixture add the bran, then the milk, alternately with the sifted dry ingredients. Pour into greased muffin tins and bake in a moderate oven (370 degrees Fahrenheit) for twenty minutes. If sweet milk is used instead of sour milk, omit the $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. of soda and use 3 ts. baking powder. Raisins or dates may be added to the muffins if desired. (12 muffins.)

Bran Biscuits

- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. all-bran
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour
- 5 ts. baking powder
- 2 tb. sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ ts. salt
- 3 tb. shortening
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. milk

Mix bran with the flour which has been sifted with the salt, baking powder, and sugar. Rub in the shortening and add the milk. Roll on a floured board to about one-half inch in thickness. Cut with a biscuit cutter, bake in a hot oven (450 degrees Fahrenheit) twelve to fifteen minutes.

Molasses Bran Cookies

- 1 c. shortening
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. boiling water
- 1 c. molasses
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. bran
- 3 c. flour
- 4 ts. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ts. soda
- 2 ts. cinnamon
- 2 ts. nutmeg
- 1 ts. cloves

Put the shortening in a bowl, add the boiling water, molasses, and sugar. Add the bran, then the flour which has been sifted with the other dry ingredients. Mix well, toss on a floured board, and roll thin. Cut and bake in a moderate oven. (4 dozen cookies.)

Breakfast Cereals

Cereals with dates and cream.

Cereals with baked apples and cream.

Cereals with bran and cream.

Cereals with agar-agar and cream