

Chapter Twenty-Five

Acid Diseases



he origin, progressive development and cure of acid diseases are very much the same whether they manifest as rheumatism, arteriosclerosis, stones (calculi), gravel, diabetes, Bright's disease, affections of the heart or apoplexy.¹

The human body is made up of acid and alkaline constituents. In order to have normal conditions and functions of tissues and organs, both must be present in the right proportions. If either the acid or the alkaline elements are present in excessive or insufficient quantities, abnormal conditions and functions, that is, **disease** will be the result.

All acids, with the exception of carbonic acid, **exert a tensing influence** upon the tissues of the body, **while alkalis have a relaxing effect**. The normal functions of the body depend upon the equilibrium between these opposing forces.

Acidity and alkalinity undoubtedly play an important part in the generation of electricity and magnetism in the human organism. Every electric cell and battery contains acid and alkaline elements; and the human body is a dynamo made up of innumerable minute electric cells and batteries in the forms of living, protoplasmic cells and organs.

¹The connotation of a disease as acid or alkaline is not an accepted concept of most doctors. However, there is much in what Dr. Lindlahr has to say about the general concept although I feel he includes a number of conditions in his list of acid diseases that do not belong. In fact, many of what he calls acid diseases the modern Nature Cure exponent today would call alkaline due to the fact that the calcium that is precipitated does so only in an alkaline medium.

It has been claimed that what we call vital force is **electricity** and **magnetism**, and that these forces are manufactured in the human body. This, however, is but a partial statement of the truth. It is true that vital force manifests in the body as electricity and magnetism, but life or vital force itself is not generated in the system.

Life is a primary force; it is the source of all activity animating the universe. From this primary force other, secondary forces are derived, such as electricity, magnetism, mind force, nerve and muscle force, etc.

These secondary, derived forces cannot be changed back into vital force in the human organism. Nothing can give life but *life* itself.

When the physical body is dead, as we call it, the life which left it is active in the spiritual body. It is independent of the physical organism just as electricity is independent of the incandescent bulb in which it manifests as light.

After this digression we shall return to our study of the cause and development of acid diseases. Nearly every disease originating in the human body is due to or accompanied by the excessive formation of different kinds of acids in the system, the most important of which are uric, carbonic, sulphuric, phosphoric and oxalic acids. These, together with xanthines, poisonous alkaloids and ptomaines, are formed during the processes of protein and starch digestion and in the breaking down and decay of cells and tissues.

Of these different waste products, **uric acid** causes probably the most trouble in the organism. The majority of diseases arising within the human body are due to its erratic behavior. Together with oxalic acid, it is responsible for arteriosclerosis, arthritic rheumatism and the formation of calculi.²

Dr. Haig of London has done excellent work in the investigation of uric-acid poisoning, but he becomes one-sided when he makes uric acid the scapegoat for all disease conditions originating in the organism. In his philosophy of disease he fails to take into consideration the effects of other acids and systemic poisons. For instance,

² This is probably not true. It was felt that the uric acid was caused by the breakdown of meat by-products and so was the villain to the early Nature Cure doctors. We now know that this is not true. Their basic principles are good but some of these specifics have not stood the test of time.

he does not mention the fact that carbonic acid is produced in the system somewhat similarly to the formation of coal gas in the furnace; and that its accumulation prevents the entrance of oxygen into the cells and tissues, thus causing asphyxiation or oxygen starvation, which manifests in the symptoms of anemia and tuberculosis.

Neither does Dr. Haig explain the effects of other destructive by-products formed during the digestion of starches and proteins. Sulphurous acid and sulphuric acid (vitriol), as well as phosphorus and phosphoric acids **actually burn up the tissues of the body**. They destroy the cellulose membranes which form the protecting skins or envelopes of the cells, dissolve the protoplasm and allow the latter to escape into the circulation. This accounts for the symptoms of Bright's disease, the presence of albumen (cell protoplasm) in blood and urine, the clogging of the circulation, the consequent stagnation and the accumulation of blood serum (dropsy) and the final breaking down of the tissues (necrosis) resulting in open sores and ulcers.

Excess of phosphorus and the acids derived from it overstimulates the brain and the nervous system, causing nervousness, irritability, hysteria and the different forms of mania.

An example of this is the distemper of a horse when given too much oats and not enough grass or hay. The excess of phosphorus and phosphoric acids formed from the protein materials of the grain, if not neutralized by the alkaline minerals contained in grasses, hay or straw, will overstimulate and irritate the nervous system of the animal and cause it to become nervous, irritable and vicious. These symptoms disappear when the rations of oats are decreased and when more fresh grass or hay is fed in place of the grain.

Similar effects to those produced upon the horse by an excess of grains are caused in the human organism, especially in the sensitive nervous system of the child, by a surplus of protein foods, of meat, eggs, grains and pulses.

Still, when patients suffering from overstimulation of the brain and nervous system consult their doctor, his advice in almost every instance is: "Your nerves are weak and overwrought. You need plenty of good, nourishing food (broths, meat and eggs), and 'a good tonic.' "

The remedies prescribed by the doctor are the very things which caused the trouble in the first place.

As stated before, uric acid is undoubtedly one of the most common causes of disease and therefore deserves especial attention. Through the study of its peculiar behavior under different circumstances and influences, the cause, nature and development of all acid diseases will become clearer.

Like urea, uric acid is one of the end products of protein digestion. It is formed in much smaller quantities than urea, in proportion of about one to fifty, but the latter is more easily eliminated from the system through kidneys and skin.

The principal ingredient in the formation of uric acid is **nitrogen**, one of the six elements which enter into all protein or albuminous food materials, also called nitrogenous foods. Uric acid, as one of the by-products of digestion, is therefore always present in the blood and, in moderate quantities, serves useful purposes in the economy of the human and animal organism like the other waste materials. It becomes a source of irritation and cause of disease only when it is present in the circulation or in the tissues in excessive amounts.

How Uric Acid Is Precipitated

The alkaline blood takes up the uric acid, dissolves it and holds it in solution in the circulation until it is carried to the organs of depuration and eliminated in perspiration and urine. If, however, through the excessive use of nitrogenous foods or defective elimination, the **amount of uric acid in the system is increased beyond a certain limit**, the blood loses its power to dissolve it and it forms a sticky, glue-like, colloid substance, which occludes or blocks up the minute blood vessels (capillaries), so that the blood cannot pass readily from the arterial system into the venous circulation.

This interference with the free passing of the blood is greater in proportion to the distance from the heart, because the farther from the heart, the less the force behind the circulation. Therefore we find that slowing up of the blood currents, whether due to uric acid occlusion or any other cause, is more pronounced in the surface of the body and in the extremities than in the interior parts and organs.

This occlusion of the surface circulation can be easily observed and even measured by a simple test. Press the tip of the forefinger of

one hand on the back of the other. A white spot will be formed where the blood has receded from the surface on account of the pressure. Now observe how quickly or how slowly the blood returns into this white patch.

Dr. Haig says that, if the reflux of the blood take place within two or three seconds, the circulation is normal and not obstructed by uric acid. If, however, the blood does not return for four or more seconds, it is a sign that the capillary circulation is obstructed by colloid uric acid occlusion.³

In this connection I would call attention to the fact that the accumulation of carbonic acid in the cells and tissues, and the resulting oxygen starvation, may produce similar interference with the circulation and result in the same symptoms, including the slow reflux of blood after pressure, as those which Dr. Haig ascribes to the action of uric acid only.

When this obstruction of the circulation by uric or carbonic acid prevails throughout the body, the blood pressure is too high in the arterial blood vessels and in the interior organs, such as heart, lungs, brain, etc., and too low in the surface, the extremities and in the venous circulation. The return flow of the blood to the heart through the veins is sluggish and stagnant because the force from behind, that is, the arterial blood pressure, is obstructed by the uric acid which clogs the minute capillaries that form the connection between the arterial and the venous systems.

Because of this interference with the normal circulation and distribution of the blood, uric acid produces many annoying and deleterious effects. It irritates the nerves, the mucous membranes and other tissues of the body, thus causing headaches, rheumatic pains in joints and muscles, congestion of blood in the head, flushes, dizziness, depression, fainting and even epilepsy.

Other results of uric acid irritation are: inflammatory and catarrhal conditions of the bronchi, lungs, stomach, intestines, genitourinary organs; rapid pulse; palpitation of the heart; angina pectoris; etc.

These colloid substances occlude the minute excretory ducts in liver, spleen, kidneys and other organs, interfering with their nor-

³This test is valid on a broad scale to check circulation but does not necessarily indicate that uric acid is the cause of the inferior circulation.

mal functions and causing the retention of morbid matter in the system.

All these troublesome and destructive effects of uric acid poisoning may be greatly augmented by excessive accumulation of sulphuric, phosphoric and other acids, and by the formation of ptomaines and poisonous alkaloids during the metabolism of proteid substances. The entire group of symptoms caused by the excess of uric acid in the system and the resulting occlusion of the capillary blood vessels by colloid substances is called *collemia* [a glutinous or viscid condition of the blood].

If in such a condition as *collemia* the amount of uric acid in the circulation is still farther increased by the taking of uric acid-producing food and drink and the saturation point of the blood is reached, that is, if the blood becomes overcharged with the acid, a curious phenomenon may be observed: **the collaemic symptoms suddenly disappear** as if by magic, giving way to a feeling of physical and mental buoyancy and strength.

This wonderful change has been wrought because the blood has lost its capacity for dissolving uric acid and holding it in solution and the acid has been precipitated, thrown out of the circulation and deposited in the tissues of the body.

After a period of rest, that is, when no uric acid- or xanthine-producing foods have been taken for some time, say, overnight, the blood regains its alkalinity and its capacity for dissolving and carrying uric acid and begins to reabsorb it from the tissues. As a consequence, the blood becomes again saturated with uric acid and the collaemic symptoms reappear.

This explains why the hilariousness and exaltation of spirits at the banquet is followed by “Katzenjammer” [hangover] in the morning. It also explains why many people do not feel fit for their day’s work unless they take a stimulant of some kind on arising. Their blood is continually filled with uric acid to the point of saturation and the extra amount contained in the coffee or alcohol repeats the process of uric-acid precipitation, the temporary stimulation and relief. ⁴

⁴The effect that Dr. Lindlahr describes here does happen. It probably does have something to do with processes related to those he discusses but are undoubtedly much more complicated in their biochemical mechanisms. He was a good observer and clinician but the science of the day let him down at times.

Every time this precipitation of uric acid from the circulation is repeated, some of the morbid materials remain and accumulate in different parts and organs. If these irritating substances become lodged in the joints and muscles, arthritic or muscular rheumatism is the result. If acids, xanthines and oxalates of lime form earthy deposits along the walls of arteries and veins, these vessels harden and become inelastic, and their diameter is diminished. This obstructs the free circulation of the blood and causes malnutrition of the brain and other vital organs. Furthermore, the blood vessels become brittle and break easily and there is danger of hemorrhages.

This explains the origin and development of arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and apoplexy. [Cholesterol was not known at that time or at least not in its effects upon the blood vessels. It, along with some still unknown factors, is probably the real cause of collemia.]

Apoplexy may also be caused by other acids and drug poisons which soften, corrode and destroy the walls of the blood vessels in the brain.

In individuals of different constitutions, accumulations of uric acid, xanthines, oxalates of calcium and various other earthy substances form stones, gravel or sandy deposits in the kidneys, the gall bladder and in other parts and organs.

The diseases caused by permanent deposits of uric acid in the tissues are called arthritic diseases, because the accumulations frequently occur in the joints.⁵

Thus we distinguish two distinct stages of uric acid diseases: the **collaemic** stage, marked by an excess of uric acid in the circulation and resulting in occlusion of the capillary blood vessels, and the **arthritic** stage, marked by permanent deposits of uric acid and other earthy substances in the tissues of the body.

During the prevalence of the collaemic symptoms, that is, when the circulation is saturated with uric acid, the urine is also highly acid. When precipitation of the acid materials from the blood into the tissues has taken place, the amount of acid in the urine decreases materially.

⁵ This is true in the case of gout. Gout we know is directly caused by a accumulation of uric acid in the joints, particularly the great toe. Most other arthritic deposits are calcium and not uric acid.

I have repeatedly stated that xanthines have the same effect upon the system as uric acid. Caffeine and theobromine, the narcotic principles of coffee and tea, are xanthines; and so is the nicotine contained in tobacco. Peas, beans, lentils, mushrooms and peanuts, besides being very rich in uric acid-producing proteins, carry also large percentages of xanthines, which are chemically almost identical with uric acid and have a similar effect upon the organism and its functions.⁶

From what has been said, it becomes clear why the meat-eater craves alcohol and xanthines. When by the taking of flesh foods the blood has become saturated with uric acid and the annoying symptoms of collaemia make their appearance in the forms of lassitude, headache and nervous depression, then alcohol and the xanthines contained in coffee, tea and tobacco will cause the precipitation of the acids from the circulation into the tissues of the body, and thus temporarily relieve the collaemic symptoms and create a feeling of well-being and stimulation.

Gradually, however, the blood regains its alkalinity and its acid-dissolving power and enough of the acid deposits are reabsorbed by the circulation to cause a return of the symptoms of collaemia. Then arises a craving for more alcohol, coffee, tea, nicotine or xanthine-producing foods in order to again obtain temporary relief and stimulation, and so on, ad infinitum.

The person addicted to the use of stimulants is never himself. His mental, moral and emotional equilibrium is always unbalanced. His brain is muddled with poisons and he lacks the self-control, the clear vision and steady hand necessary for the achievement of success in any line of endeavor.

We can now understand why one stimulant craves another, why it is almost impossible to give up one stimulant without giving up all others as well.

From the foregoing it will have become clear that **the stimulating effect of alcohol and of many so-called tonics depends upon their power to clear the circulation temporarily of uric and other acids.** Those who have read this chapter carefully, will know why this effect is deceptive and temporary and why it is followed by a return of the collaemic symptoms in aggravated form, and how

⁶ This has not been proven and passing time has indicated otherwise.

these are gradually changed into chronic arthritic uric acid diseases.

In order to give a better idea of the various phases of uric acid poisoning, I have used the following illustration in some of my lectures:

A man may carry a burden of fifty pounds on his shoulders without difficulty or serious discomfort. Let this correspond to the normal solving-power and carrying-capacity of the blood for uric acid. Suppose you add gradually to the burden on the man's back until its weight has reached one-hundred and fifty pounds. He may still be able to carry the burden, but as the weight increases he will begin to show signs of distress. This increase of weight and the attendant discomfort correspond to the increase of uric acid in the blood and the accompanying symptoms of collaemia.

If you increase the burden on the man's shoulders still further, beyond his individual carrying-capacity, a point will be reached when he can no longer support its weight and will throw it off entirely. This climax corresponds to the saturation point of the blood, when the limit of its acid-carrying capacity is exceeded and its acid contents are precipitated into the tissues.

The Treatment of Acid Diseases

The treatment of acid diseases is the same as of all other diseases that are due to the violation of Nature's laws: purification of blood and tissues from within and building up of the vital fluids (blood and lymph) on a natural basis through normal habits of eating, dressing, bathing, breathing, working, resting and thinking as outlined in other parts of this volume.

In severe cases which have reached the chronic stage, the treatment must be supplemented by the more aggressive methods of strict diet, hydrotherapy, curative gymnastics, massage, manipulation and homeopathic medication.⁷

⁷ This chapter was retained in our *revisitation* of *Nature Cure* because it is a good example of how a theory of cause can be wrong but the therapy evolved from that theory can be valid. While we find Dr. Lindlahr's explanation of the etiology of the various diseases he mentions rather laughable today, if we examine his treatment we find that it is in harmony with the most advanced protocol for treating many of these conditions. This is one of the advantages of the Nature Cure method; it cures by normalizing the body's chemical and electrical balances and assisting the body in its (Continued on the next page.)

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(Continued from page 229) efforts to stabilize itself. When this is done the body has the ability to cure the disease regardless of the actual mechanism involved. Because of this, Dr. Lindlahr was able to cure many chronic patients even though his theory of how that cure was accomplished may have been faulty.

One last thought on this subject. While we may smile at Dr. Lindlahr's explanations of some chronic ailments today, our most advanced researchers still do not have definitive answers as to the exact cause of most of the conditions Dr. Lindlahr mentions. Very likely researchers a century in the future will look upon our theories with as much humor as we now look on those of Dr. Lindlahr. At least he was curing many of these conditions, something that cannot be said of the majority in medical practice today.

