

Tobacco In Moderation, Doesn't Shorten Life

BY DR. MORRIS FISHBEIN

THE amount of tobacco used in the United States has been steadily increasing for many years.

In 1915 the United States produced about 6,500,000,000 cigars and about 18,000,000,000 cigarettes. In 1935 the figure was reduced to around 5,000,000,000 cigars and raised to 135,000,000,000 cigarettes. The one new factor of importance outside of the relatively slight increase in population was tobacco smoking on a large scale by women.

The exact effects of tobacco on health are not very well understood. Probably the agitators against tobacco have greatly over-emphasized the harmfulness of smoking and those who favor its use have underemphasized its dangers.

As nearly as we can put the matter in one sentence, there is no good evidence that tobacco smoking in moderation will shorten the average man's life; although burning tobacco gives rise to a considerable number of substances which in large doses may damage the tissues of the human body, such as nicotine, pyridine, furfural, and carbon monoxide.

Some people have irritation of the nose, throat and lungs from tobacco. Others seem to avoid irritation.

There is some evidence that the use of tobacco may produce a slowing of the circulation in the capillary blood vessels, and smoking has been related particularly to the onset of such conditions as thrombo-angitis obliterans or Buerger's disease, and to other diseases which are the result of interference with circulation.

Cancer of the mouth is more frequent among men than among women. It has been believed that its greater prevalence among men is associated with the larg-

er amount of smoking done by men. In recent years women have smoked in increasing numbers and there is some reason to believe that cancer of the mouth is appearing with greater frequency among women.

Cancer is definitely related to irritation. Cases are known in which cancers of the lip have appeared at the point where a pipe is regularly held or where a cigaret becomes adherent to the tissues of the lip and is frequently pulled off.

Recently there have been many notions developed in relationship to the smoking of tobacco which need clarification. It has been said that the paper coverings on cigarets contained various habit forming or narcotic drugs or that they contained special substances which interfere with the appetite.

As far as we know, there is no evidence that paper on cigarets now generally on the market contains any habit forming or narcotic drugs.

There is a general impression that smoking by mothers of young infants or by prospective mothers does harm to the child. Apparently there has been no scientific study of importance directly on this point. However, knowing that harmful drugs may be transmitted in the mother's milk or through her blood to the body of the infant, all specialists in these subjects recommend great moderation, if not complete abstinence for prospective or nursing mothers.

All sorts of preparations have been developed with the idea that they would cause people to stop smoking. Apparently the discontinuing of smoking, as of any other habit, depends largely on the will of the person. The use of various substitutes or bad tasting medicines does not seem to be especially valuable.