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MOUNT JOY — MAYTOWN

The Worry Clinic

by Dr. Geo. W. Crane

Edith's problem troubles millions of people in summer. For the body is a miraculous creation with built-in thermostats. Use the analogy of the city water faucets to see why pressure drops when your skin grows flush with hot weather. If your pulse is too fast, that may produce swollen ankles, too.

CASE N-588: Edith W., aged 40, is worried.

"We meet once per month.

"But at our last session, several complained about swollen ankles.

"And I have noticed the same thing in both of mine, for my feet and ankles puff up in summer.

"They are all right in the morning but by the middle of the afternoon, I often can not wear my shoes.

"What is wrong with me?"

MEDICAL FACTS

During very hot weather, many people turn on their faucets and (unless the city forbids such daytime use of water) they may have their lawns sprinklers in action.

For kiddies like to run under the cold spray.

Now suppose you live on the top floor of a 10-story apartment building.

What happens to the water pressure?

Often, it may become so reduced that you can't get more than a trickle out of the faucets. Why?

Because the city water pumps, if working at their previous normal capacity, can't maintain adequate pressure.

Same applies to your heart as it tries to keep up the circulation of blood.

In summer, your skin is more pink, why?

Because your body tries to open the vessels wider in the skin so more blood will get cooled by the air around you.

For your body is a very ingenious creation, with built-in thermostats.

Thus, in winter, your skin blanches, for your body then tries to keep more blood in your trunk to avoid chilling. Thus, it shrinks your skin vessels.

But the reverse occurs in summer, so you get flushed when you are hot, in order to cool your blood faster and thus keep your bodily temperature at its normal 98.6 degrees.

Gravity also explains why

the ankles swell later in the day.

For at night, you are in the horizontal position at least 8 or 9 hours.

But after you jump out of bed, you stand upright for many hours and gravity tends to compete with your heart.

So some of the watery contents of your blood seeps through blood vessel walls and thus accumulates at the lowest spot, which is your feet and ankles.

A mild amount of swelling

in summer is thus very common in otherwise healthy people.

But when you show exaggerated swelling or if your legs grow larger in winter, it may mean that your heart is racing too fast to maintain a good, strong circulation.

So doctors then give you drugs, such as digitalis, to slow down your pulse rate to about 80 or less.

For that rate permits your heart to restore proper circulation, which picks up the

excess fluid in the tissues (especially your legs) and lets the kidneys excrete it.

Mildly swollen ankles in hot weather usually indicate low blood pressure.

So prop your feet upon a hassock whenever you are sitting down as at sewing or reading or watching TV.

For that posture rests your heart, by slowing its rate 7 or 12 beats per minute.

Self-distrust is the essence of heroism. —Emerson

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