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## COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

### Extension Division

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# CLOTHES AND THEIR RELATION TO HEALTH

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## CIRCULAR NO. 170

### Clothes and Their Relation to Health

By KATHARINE B. CHRISTIAN

Field Agent in Clothing.

#### A HEALTHY BODY TO CLOTHE.

The woman who has developed round shoulders, a hollow chest, protruding abdomen and crooked feet has built the poorest foundation possible on which to place her clothing. These self-inflicted deformities should be corrected early in life by daily physical exercises and by wearing the right kind of corset and shoes. Such practises will do much toward reducing the hips, straightening the back and bringing about better posture and general health.

“To fill positions of trust, women must be competent and educated in health and hygiene.” Every business woman of today, and the home maker is truly a business woman, who is competent and educated to do her daily tasks, realizes that her chief assets are her health and happiness. She must not do anything to injure these, because they are the foundation from which her enthusiasm springs; consequently she pays a great deal of attention to her diet and clothing, eating food to keep her fit and wearing clothing for health and comfort. “To be comfortable she must commence her line of dress from the foundation and her posture, shoes and corset make the foundation that is right or wrong.”

#### NO GARMENT LOOKS WELL ON A POORLY POISED BODY.

Good posture is essential for good health and good looks. To carry the body erect, head high, and to move with an elastic step will gain the applause of discriminating people. The woman who slumps will never appear well, no matter how handsomely gowned. She will be envious of her neighbor who looks well in a gingham frock because her carriage and poise attract rather than the dress she wears. The girl with the slouching figure and hollow chest is unattractive enough when young, but when she develops into a misshapen woman with superfluous flesh about the abdomen and shoulders, the most skillful artist will be unable to disguise her deformities. The stylish woman is always well

poised. This means that she stands well, sits well and walks well. She carries her chest high and head up. Appropriate and becoming clothing worn by this woman will always give the feeling of comfort. A consciousness that she has made the most of her good points will give greater self-confidence.

Correct posture, as shown in Fig. 1, implies that a plumb-line dropt from the top of the head would go down thru the hip joints, kneecaps and thence thru the ball of the foot. This poise insures the least effort on the part of the muscles to maintain the body upright.



Fig. 1

If the body is inclined to lean forward as is shown in Fig. 2, there is a constant strain on the muscles of the back to keep the body from falling. There is no rest for these muscles as long as the body thus poised remains in a standing position. It is needless to mention that this position is not graceful.

Fig. 3 shows a third position in which the body is inclined to lean backward, causing strain on the opposite side from that in Fig. 2. This constant strain develops the muscles of the back.

On the side opposite the arrow points, the muscles have very little exercise and fatness results.



Fig. 2

**WERE YOUR CORSETS PROPERLY FITTED?**

Very few women are wearing healthful corsets. It is better to remain corsetless than to mistreat the body with an ill-fitting corset anchored above the waistline in such a way that the pressure comes directly on the abdomen, pushing downward instead of

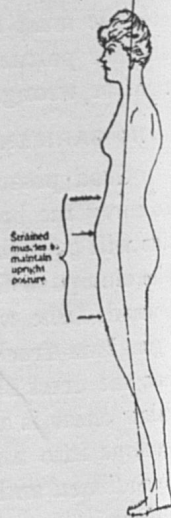


Fig. 3

acting as a support. The abdominal wall must be supported from beneath, as any downward pressure pushes the organs of the abdominal cavity out of place, causing headaches, circles under the eyes, a feeling of exhaustion and, in some cases, disorders which can be corrected only by a surgical operation.

A corset should be worn for two reasons; to act as a support to the body, and to control and preserve the natural lines of the figure. If a figure is out of alignment, due to improper corseting or incorrect posture, a change cannot be made in an instant. It will take time and perseverance to induce the proper poise while standing. If the muscles are strong, the clothing suspended from the shoulders, and the body carried well at all times, the corset is unnecessary. However, physicians tell us that few women do take the time to give the body proper exercise when no corset is worn and the result is the well known corsetless figure. Fat easily and quickly accumulates around the hips and waist. This is quite prevalent in the eager-eyed immigrant woman of Ellis Island, who possesses a figure that has never known a corset. How many women would desire a figure like hers? Yet this is the direction in which many are going unless more time and thought are given to correct corseting. The right type of corset for the figure can be obtained only thru a corsetiere who has made a study of correct corseting. Every woman who wears a corset should take advantage of the opportunity to gain the services of such a person trained along these lines. Once the right type is obtained the corset can be ordered afterwards by number, which is an advantage to women living in suburban districts. Corsets should be fitted, no matter how inexpensive. There is no additional charge for fitting. However, money invested in a good corset is well spent because a good corset will give longer service and greater comfort than a cheaper one. The day of the old-time corset with the high bust and curved front and sides is gone. The low-top model with plenty of length to support the abdomen and control the hips is shown for nearly every figure. The low bust model allows freedom at the waist which is not true of the high bust type. This old-fashioned

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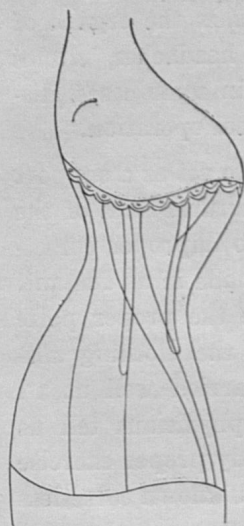


Fig. 4

model, shown in Fig. 4, impedes circulation, as do all tight waist bands. Fig. 5 portrays the low bust type worn today which has its proper function for the costume as well as health. It retains the natural lines of the body.

With the low-bust corset a brassiere should be worn to hold the breast firm. When it has straight lines, sufficient length to come well down over the top of the corset, and does not bind, it will take care of the bust and control any

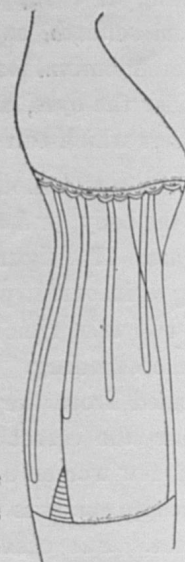


Fig. 5

fullness that may be evident at the waist line.

Corsets and brassieres of the type recommended can be obtained in most makes. Controlling the figure is not as difficult as it would seem and money invested in a well made corset is always well spent.

#### ADJUSTING THE CORSET.

The corset should be adjusted while standing in front of a mirror. Only by careful daily adjustment can you expect the proper support, comfort and service from your corset; consequently, a corset should be relaced each time it is put on. This requires only a few minutes and once the habit is formed the time spent will be returned in the satisfaction derived. In cases of superfluous flesh or sagging of the abdominal muscles, it is advisable to lie down when lacing the corset. When lying flat on the back all the abdominal organs fall into their proper places and greater comfort follows.

FRONT LACE

1. Loosen strings to limit.
2. Place corset around back and well under abdomen. (Be sure that it is sufficiently low on the body.)
3. Anchor corset straight with lines of body and at waist line.
4. Snap bottom fastener or second from bottom and continue to top.
5. Fasten the bottom clasp hook and the hooks of the soft extension.
6. Fasten front supporters well to front of stockings (foot resting on chair.)
7. Before lacing, hold the bottom of the corset on the left side with the left hand and with the right smooth the flesh gently up in the corset on the left side. Reversing hands, repeat on opposite side.  
Note: At this point one may lie down or remain standing to complete lacing.
8. To lace lying down: Lie down and bend knees until feet are flat on the bed. Relax and begin lacing from bottom, easily the first time to remove surplus string; a little firmer the second time and, usually, the third time will make the corset as close as it should be worn.
9. Tie or twist strings and tuck inside the corset.
10. Stand up and fasten back supporters.
11. To lace standing: Hold the body erect in front of mirror, pull strings *slightly* at the waist to insure correct anchorage and begin lacing from the bottom up. Continue as in 8, 9 and 10.

Note: The corset should be laced an even distance from top to bottom, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches. (For some figures the distance may be slightly wider at the top ( $\frac{1}{2}$ "') than at the bottom to insure greater comfort.)

BACK LACE

1. Loosen strings to limit.
2. Place corset around back and well under abdomen (Be sure that it is sufficiently low on the body.)

3. Anchor corset straight with lines of body at waist line.
4. Snap bottom fastener or second from bottom and continue to top.
5. Fasten the top clasp hook and the hooks of the soft extension.
6. Fasten supporters a little to the back (foot resting on chair.)
7. Before lacing, hold the bottom of the corset on the left side with the left hand and with the right pull the flesh gently up in the corset on the left side. Reverse hands and repeat on the opposite side. The same thing may be done in the back.
8. Pull strings slightly at waist line to insure correct anchorage and prevent crawling up.
9. Lace from bottom up, going over strings several times as in front lace.

Note: The edges should be about two inches apart from top to bottom when laced. Be sure to lace the corset uniformly, as tight lacing at the top and bottom allows the flesh to bulge above and below the waist line and gives an ugly back.

Frequent laundering is necessary for the proper care of corsets. They should never be allowed to get really dirty, as perspiration causes the most durable fabric to wear out quickly. To wash your corset, use warm water and a mild soap. Too high a temperature will destroy the elastic and alkalies will damage the material. Scrub with a stiff nail brush both inside and out until every particle of soil has disappeared. Rinse thoroly several times so that all soap is removed. To make the corset appear fresher and newer, it may be tinted pink, using any of the preparations for sale at drug and department stores. When almost dry, press with a moderately hot iron.

Don't wear the same corset day after day. By alternating it with at least one other, the life of each corset will be more than doubled. This is just as true as it is with shoes.



The corset is the foundation for all the other clothing and it speaks for or against the wearer. Instead of dressing from the outside in, you should start dressing from the inside, the first step being to cultivate better health, posture and poise.

**BETTER SHOES MEAN A SANER BALANCE.**

For the person who stands a great part of the day, a shoe with a broad heel, straight inner line and sufficient room for the toes to lie flat, is most desirable. The day of pride over small feet has passed and women are giving comfort the first consideration.

Most women's feet are distorted from wearing the high heel and short shoe with a narrow, pointed toe. The point forces the large toe toward the middle of the foot, often causing bunions at the joint. This enlargement is not only painful but detracts greatly from the appearance of the foot. The high heel throws the foot forward and crowds the toes together, causing corns and callouses. It also prevents the body from taking its natural poise, so that the weight is not properly balanced and the muscles are strained. This causes fatigue, lack of endurance and often internal troubles, especially in growing girls.

A wise woman will see that her feet are correctly shod during working hours, even if, at the end of the day, when sitting most of the time, she yields to a shoe with a more pointed toe and a higher heel. This type of shoe is not out of place for dress occasions, but for general wear it is neither healthful nor in good taste.

A woman who requires a high-heeled shoe for comfort is suffering from some structural defect of the foot and should consult an orthopedist. She will find that the transition to the low heel should be made in steps, from high to medium and from medium to low.

The first point to be considered when seeking relief from foot trouble is to be sure that the shoes worn are made on the right lines. Then if they have been properly fitted and the trouble remains it may come from incorrect walking. Pointing the toe out or in throws the weight on the inner or outer part of the foot, respectively, which tends to weaken the arch. Savage

paces who can walk for hours without tiring walk with the feet pointed straight ahead. If a child's shoes are sufficiently long and wide the undesirable habit of "toeing" in or out will seldom be formed. The manner of placing the feet should be noticed when children first begin to walk. Then, with a little training, they can be taught to point the toes straight ahead.

The wearing of run-down heels about the house is bad for the ankles and for the poise of the body. There is more economy in discarding a pair of ill-fitting, out-of-shape shoes than in mistreating the feet by wearing them.

Compare the two types of shoes in Fig. 6. Which do you think is the more practical and comfortable?

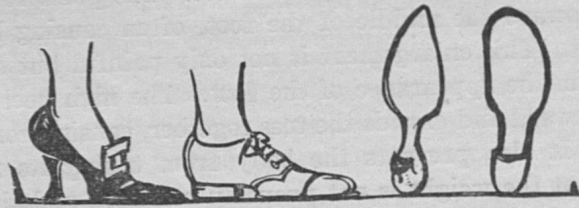


Fig. 6.

Shoes should be kept on trees or stuffed with paper when not in use. They should be dusted and cleaned each time before putting away and a box of polish with an old stocking to deliver the shine is a good investment. All this helps to increase the life of the shoe.

The wardrobe is not complete without rubbers. They not only protect and prolong the life of the shoes but also prolong the life of the wearer; for keeping the feet dry and warm is one of the greatest secrets of good health. Tips are worse than none, if worn in a heavy rain, as the water seeps in and is held next to the sole. Rubbers with heels should be kept on hand for a rainy day and tips only for sleet or dampness.

#### STOCKINGS FOR THE FAMILY.

Stockings and socks are made of cotton, wool and silk. For children, good grades of cotton stockings are most desirable, as they are strong and easily laundered. Cotton stockings for adults are good if the best grades are bought. Otherwise they

will develop a nappy surface and fade. The dye, which is often not fast in cotton stockings, will also cause discomfort to some feet. Cotton and silk or cotton and linen mixtures make a much stronger stocking and have a much smoother appearance.

Silk hoes are economical if they are made of a good quality of silk and if carefully laundered. Silk stockings require more care in laundering than cotton, as very hot water and strong soap weaken the fibers. Cold water and pure soap should be used in laundering white silk hose. Rinse thoroly, as soap left in stockings causes them to become yellow, and dry in the shade, and they will remain white longer.

Wool stockings feel warm when worn on a cold day. They are excellent for out-of-door wear but should be changed for lighter hose when indoors, as wool shrinks and becomes felted when damp with perspiration, causing the foot to become tender and sore. Wool and cotton or wool and silk mixtures are more satisfactory than all wool. Great care should be taken in laundering, always using lukewarm water, as hot water shrinks them and causes the fibers to become harsh.

There is economy in buying fewer stockings of good quality, even if paying more for them. Two pairs of every-day stockings are enough to keep in use at one time, alternating them in use and rinsing each night. It is advisable to purchase stockings for general wear by the box, three pairs in a box, as they will match and when one wears out, the mate can be worn with the other stockings until all are gone. They should be washed after each wearing, as perspiration left in them weakens and destroys the fibers.

#### UNDERGARMENTS THAT ARE COMFORTABLE AND HYGIENIC

Do women give as much thought to their undergarments as they do to their outer ones? Often little attention is given them, as they are not generally seen; yet few things affect the comfort, disposition and personal charm of the wearer quite as much as ill-fitting, poorly selected and unhygienic underclothes.

The materials from which undergarments are made should be selected from the standpoint of absorption, ventilation, sterilization, warmth and cost, as the garment next to the skin should

be porous and of a fiber and texture to keep the body dry. Any loosely woven or knitted underwear with air spaces is more hygienic than that which is closely woven.

Cotton material is cheapest, therefore is universally worn. It is easily laundered, making it desirable for summer use. When worn next to the body, closely woven cotton material holds moisture and remains wet and cold, which is uncomfortable and is a detriment to good health. The fabric should be porous and loosely woven so that better ventilation may be possible.

Wool, tho good in many respects, is difficult to keep clean, as it collects dirt and bacteria and mats with careless washing. These facts make other fibers or combinations of fibers more desirable, but invalids, older people and young children often need the protection of woolen undergarments. Therefore, when woolen underclothes are worn unusual caution should be taken in laundering. A union garment is preferable to two pieces, as it covers the body without overlapping at the waist.

#### ARE YOUR UNDERGARMENTS SUITABLE FOR YOUR OCCUPATION?

Women's occupations should govern the amount of underclothing they wear. This should be selected to preserve the heat of the body in the temperature at which most of the day is spent. Those who are indoors need not wear as heavy underclothes as those who are exposed most of the time. However, nothing is more out of taste than too little underclothing, even in warm weather. The camisole or teddy that is loosely strapped and dropped almost to the waist line will make itself known thru a sheer gown, calling attention to itself rather than to the garment under which it is worn.

For general use undergarments should be simple in design, using machine hemstitching for decoration and dainty tapes that do not have to be removed when laundering. All this saves time and energy and appears much better for general use than flimsy, perishable laces and faded ribbons. The design of the undergarments should be regulated by the garments under which they are to be worn, as they help to form the foundation for the outer garments.

**TIGHT BANDS AN ENEMY TO HEALTH.**

How often have you appeared ill-at-ease or were cross with your family because a band was too tight and you either did not stop to fix it or else did not diagnose the trouble? Elastic shrinks when laundered, therefore, is not satisfactory to use for belts in wash dresses unless removed before laundering. Neckbands, armholes, the stride and leg bands of bloomers in the clothes of growing children often become tight and cause them much discomfort. These things should be watched, as bad disposition and ill health may be the result.

**OUTER GARMENTS THAT PAY.**

Outer garments are usually purchased with greater consideration than undergarments. This is often more for style and appearance than for quality and suitability of the garment to the wearer or for the occasion on which it is to be worn. Why not combine all these and have garments that can be worn until they have paid for themselves and in which one will always feel well dressed? Much time, energy and money are wasted and many women are made inefficient and ill-at-ease on account of unbecoming, inappropriate and too hastily selected garments which are often too narrow or too cumbersome to be comfortable.

Silk and wool cannot be laundered as cotton material and cannot be kept fresh and clean. Nothing looks worse than a "grease-spotted" silk or woolen dress worn in the kitchen. Before it becomes the victim of many spots the wearer is handicapped when working, as she is afraid she will ruin it. She cannot do her work with as much ease as when she is dressed in gingham, nor does she appear as neatly and appropriately dressed. Consequently, house dresses should be made of washable materials.

Garments that are extreme in fashion are a bad investment as they soon become out-of-date and the wearer feels conspicuous and ill-at-ease. Learn to select subdued, practical clothes for street and general wear; then indulge in frills and colors in your evening gowns.

