OBESITY

Overeating of food, particularly carbohydrate foods, leads to an excessive increase in weight. Obesity is not only disfiguring and disabling; it also offers a hazard to health of fat people. Their activity and enjoyment of life are restricted by their excessive weight.

The cause of obesity is not always apparent. Many people overeat because they are unhappy or bored and that find that eating offers some temporary sol­ace. Sometimes women put on weight excessively during pregnancy, perhaps because they think mistakenly that they must 'eat enough for two’ and partly because they tend to stay at home during the last few months with food always available. This may be due to a hereditary tendency or it may be due to the fact that some families make a habit of overeating.

It is often thought that obesity is 'due to glands’, but this is seldom true. Excessive cortisone leads to obesity of an unusual kind; the face and trunk are obese but the legs and arms are spared.

The only successful way to reduce weight is to eat less, though patients are usually reluctant to accept this comfortless doctrine, hoping for magic tablets or injections.

The most helpful thing is a diet in which carbohydrates are severely re­stricted. Protein foods such as fish, meat, chicken, eggs and cheese can be eaten in reasonable amounts, with green vegetables or salads.

Regular exercise is helpful in preventing obesity.

So, success in reducing weight can only be obtained if the patient is aware of the dangers to health in being obese, and that the only way to reduce weight is to eat less.