9 Eating or Drinking Something—usually, sweet

Can you imagine drinking a bourbon and soda right after a chocolate malted? Or a beer on top of a piece of cake with icing?

If you're not too ill to read on, you will agree that they don't sound exactly made for each other.

In one way, that is what this portion of our experience is about. Many of us have learned that something sweet-tasting, or almost any nourishing food or snack, seems to dampen a bit the desire for a drink. So, from time to time, we remind each other never to get too hungry.

Maybe it's just imagination, but the yen for a shot does seem to be sharper when the stomach is empty. At least, it's more noticeable.

This booklet is based on our own personal experience, rather than on scientific reports. So we cannot explain precisely, in technical terms, why this should be so. We can only pass on the word that thousands of us—even many who said they had never liked sweets—have found that eating or drinking something sweet allays the urge to drink.

Since we are neither physicians nor nutrition experts, we cannot recommend that everybody carry a chocolate bar and nibble on it whenever the thought of a drink arises. Many of us do, but others have sound health reasons for avoiding sweets. However, fresh fruit and dietetic substitutes for sweet food and drink are available, and so the idea of using a sweet *taste* is practical for anyone.

Some of us think it is more than the taste that helps quell the impulse toward alcohol. It may also be, in part, just substituting a new set of physical actions: getting a soft drink, a glass of milk or punch, and some cookies or some ice cream, then drinking or chewing, and swallowing.

Certainly, many alcoholics, when they first stop drinking, are found to be much more undernourished than they had suspected. (And the condition is encountered in all economic brackets.) For that reason, many of us are advised by our doctors to

take supplemental vitamins. So perhaps many of us simply need nourishment more than we realize, and any good food in the stomach really makes us feel better physiologically. A hamburger, honey, peanuts, raw vegetables, cheese, nuts, cold shrimp, fruit gelatin, a mint—anything you like, that is good for you, can do the trick.

Newly sober alcoholics, when it is suggested they eat instead of drink, frequently wonder: What about getting too fat? We can point out that we see this occur only rarely. Many of us lose unnecessary fat when we start taking in wholesome food instead of the sheer calories of ethyl alcohol, and others have gained needed pounds.

To be sure, a few ice cream or candy "addicts" do find in their first sober months a bulge or roll developing here and there, in the usual wrong places. But that seems a small price to pay for release from active alcoholism. Better to be chubby or pleasingly plump than drunk, right? Did you ever hear of anyone being arrested for "fat driving"?

Anyhow, with a little patience and sound judgment, the weight situation usually straightens itself out, our experience proves. If it does not, or if you have a chronic, serious obesity or underweight problem, you probably should consult a medical expert who not only knows weight problems, but also understands alcoholism. We never find any conflict between A.A experience and sound medical advice given by a physician sophisticated about alcoholism.

So the next time the temptation to drink arises, let's eat a little, or sip something gooey. At least, that puts off the drink for an hour or two, so we can take another step toward recovery... maybe the one suggested in the next section.