

Care of the Eyes in Health and in Disease

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"The most precious things need the greatest care." Eyes are the most precious and priceless pearls that human beings possess and need the greatest care. A person deprived of sight lives in utter darkness and is often a burden to himself and society. Life has no meaning and is not worth living to a person without eye-sight as he cannot enjoy the gift of God's creation. Incapacitated by accidents, injury or disease, limbs may be successfully replaced by artificial aid but eye-sight once lost can never be replaced and there is no substitute.



Good nourishment is essential for good sight.

God has designed in such a way, that

the eyes are protected by nature itself. They are set in bony sockets and protected by the eye lids, lashes and brows which, prevent dust and other particles entering the eye. It is further protected by the lacrimal glands which secrete tears to wash away any irritating substance and also to keep the eye moist.

The crystalline fluids, aqueous and vitreous humour help in strengthening the eye ball and act like crystalline glasses to refract light rays.

Although the eyes are protected by nature they need careful attention to maintain good vision and to prevent disease and accidents. *This care starts from intrauterine life and continues until death.* The foetus in uterus is safe from any source of infection being introduced into the eyes, but if by any chance the mother's health is lowered it may affect the foetus. Nutrition in general plays an important role in laying a good foundation for good eye-sight and maintaining it throughout life.

At birth skilled midwifery and nursing care prevent infection to the eye by careful cleaning of the eyes at the time of birth so that any infected vaginal discharge is washed away. Further the eyes are watched for any sign of inflammatory conditions, watery discharge or pus and, if present, expert medical and nursing treatment is needed. Particular care is also paid that this infection is not conveyed to other infants by the careful practice of aseptic techniques. These conditions can be prevented through careful antenatal care which includes the treatment for syphilis and gonorrhœa if present in the mother.

In India many people suffer from

blindness and a large number suffer from 'sore-eyes' and other more serious eye conditions. If general hygiene and personal cleanliness is observed, there is less opportunity for flies to breed and spread infection from one to the other. "*Knowledge is power and prevention is better than cure*". If the primary factors governing the underlying principles of good eye-sight are kept in mind, many of the miserable conditions affecting the eye could be well avoided.

A well balanced diet which contains an adequate supply of vitamin 'A' is required to maintain the epithelial tissue of the eye in good condition. It has been scientifically proved that many of the eye infections are due to want of proper nutrition. Xerophthalmia, night blindness, smoky sclera, scaling of the eye are some of the conditions that people commonly suffer from due to lack of vitamin 'A' in the diet. This vitamin is obtained from milk and milk products, egg, such yellow fruits as mangoes, papaya and green vegetables. In order to maintain the eye and eye-sight in good condition it is important that these articles of foods are included in the daily diet.

Prevention of infection to the eye

Care of the eyes of the new born has already been mentioned. It is essential to note here that all articles that are used for the eye should be absolutely clean. It is a common practice in some of the hospitals and in many homes that individual towels are not provided with the result that infection of one person is often carried to others. Thus infection may spread through a ward or a family, through sheer negligence or due to lack of supplies. It is important that this part of health care be brought to the notice of the people everywhere so that these eye infections can be minimised and controlled. "Sore eyes" and trachoma are two of the common conditions that are being met with in this respect.

The handkerchief is another article through which infection is easily carried to the eyes. So a clean handkerchief should be used always. Some mothers wipe children's eyes with a dirty handkerchief and other dirty cloth at hand.

Another enemy for spreading infection is the fly. They thrive on discharge from the eyes and carrying germs on their fine hairy legs; they take the infection from person to person. It is necessary that all fly breeding places should be removed and children should be protected from flies by using mosquito nets when they are sleeping. The fly nuisance can be minimised with the aid of insecticides.

Irritating substances are another source of eye trouble. Workers in industries should be careful to protect the eyes from dust particles by using glasses. Dust when once it enters the eyes does not easily come out; it may cause intense irritation and discomfort to the eyes. On dusty days we should see that our doors and windows are kept closed and curtains may be hung to keep out dust and the glare of the sun. Wearing of sun glasses is helpful for the same purpose.

Smoke is another irritating substance that causes soreness, discomfort and even blindness in many people especially women; here the smokeless *chula* serves a good purpose and should be brought to the notice of women folk, specially in the villages.

Cultivating good reading habits enables the use of eyes without strain. A good source of reading light should come from left side for a right handed person and right side for a left handed person. There should not be any shadow or glare on the material. The material must be held at a distance of about 16" away from the eyes. Prolonged and continuous reading should be avoided as it puts a strain on the eyes; there should be an interval between reading hours. This particularly applies to any fine work; a good posture must be maintained while reading.

Minor ailments can be treated at home if careful instructions are given :

(i) Any particle of dust can be removed from the eye by bathing with clean cold water.

(ii) "Sore eyes" can be treated with saline or normal eye wash after which

Argyrol may be instilled. It is always advisable to consult a specialist about affections.

(iii) An annual periodical examination of the eyes to detect any deviation from normal functioning and to maintain good health of the eye is very important.

(iv) Teach children to keep dirty fingers and objects like pencils away from eyes. Never use a handkerchief or towel belonging to any one else for wiping the eyes.

(v) Always use clean water to wash the eyes. Cold water has also a stimulating effect on the muscles of the eye ball.

(vi) Rest to the eyes from continued close work is essential. Close them for a minute or look at a distance scene preferably at green trees.

Avoid using *surma* or other foreign substances in the eyes unless prescribed by a doctor. If the eyes become sore and inflamed seek medical aid.

In conclusion may I point out that if these hygienic points are carefully practised in the every day life, the eyes—their beauty and their value can be safeguarded against many ailments. As health workers we can teach people that "Prevention is better than Cure".

Treatments of Burns — (Contd. from page 287)

antibiotic or chemotherapy is essential to prevent the possibility of infection. Anti-tetanus Serum is given to eliminate the possibility of tetanus developing. If the patient is kept under a mosquito net the danger of contamination by flies is avoided.

After the danger from shock is past, the care of the patient is chiefly that of caring for the burned area. As the eschar loosens it is cut away and when all necrotic tissue has been removed skin grafts may be done to hasten healing. For the changing of dressings it might be necessary to give the patient an injection of morphine about one half hour before or an anaesthesia such as Pentothal Sodium.

During the stage of granulation formation, serious deformities may develop

due to contractures. The nurse must make every effort to keep the part in position which will give the best functional result. This may be accomplished by the application of splints.

A diet high in calories and including all of the vitamins should be given. Blood transfusions may be given to increase the patient's strength and healing powers. Oral hygiene must be given at least four hourly. The bowels must be kept active daily. Special care should be given to the back and pressure points if it is possible.

Throughout the patient's illness the nurse must maintain a four-hourly record of temperature, pulse and respiration. Intake and elimination must be measured and recorded.

As the patient's condition improves some occupational therapy might be of benefit to him.

The treatment of burns aims at the prevention of shock, dehydration and infection, therefore the nurse must be very conscientious in carrying out the orders of the doctor and giving good nursing care.

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Recreation for Nurses — (Contd. from page 288)

We come back to the word recreation again which means that anyone who spends their spare time in some manner of enjoyment, free themselves from worries and make their heavy work seem light. So recreation is not only a mental tonic but also a physical tonic, as it promotes physical well-being in the individual and is reflected in our attitude to our patients and fellow workers.