

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE.

BABY IN INDIA.

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5. BABY'S GROWTH, REST AND EXERCISE.

There are certain points regarding her offspring's growth which, if known, will save the Indian mother much anxiety.

(1) *Weight*.—The average weight at birth is about 3 seers in Northern India. Girls as a rule weigh a few chittacks less than boys. The weight is less in parts of India where people are of smaller stature. In Calcutta the average weight is 2 seers to $3\frac{1}{2}$ chittacks in the case of boys, and 2 seers to $2\frac{1}{2}$ chittacks in the case of girls.

Babies lose about 4 chittacks during the first three days. The loss of weight is less if the baby, in addition to being put to the breast twice the first day and four times the second day, is given water freely between meals, to make up for the fluid he loses. It is less also, if he be *not* given castor oil or other purgative without medical advice.

By the 10th day the initial loss has been made good, and thereafter he gains weight at the rate of 3 chittacks a week. He should have doubled his birth weight by the end of the 5th month. After that the increase is slower—2 chittacks a week in the 6th month, $1\frac{1}{2}$ chittacks a week in the 7th and 8th month, and only 1 chittack a week in the 9th month.

Some people think that the modern custom of weighing babies once a week is fussy, and ask what good it does. It helps by putting the mother on her guard as soon as anything begins to go wrong, but she must not worry unduly about an occasional slowness in gain; which sometimes happens without any reason in India.

(2) *Height*.—A new-born baby is about 20 inches in length, or he should gain about one inch a month during the first six months and half an inch during the next six months, so that he should measure 28 to 29 inches when a year old.

(3) *Baby's head*.—The increase in size of the head, from the growth of the child's brain, is very striking. At birth the measurement round the head at the level of the forehead is 13 inches. At one year it is 18 inches. Thereafter growth is slow, only 2 inches in the next four years. The brain gains more than a pound in weight during the first year, more than it will gain in the next twenty years.

How to know when baby is getting on satisfactorily.

1. He will gain steadily in weight.
2. His flesh will be firm and his skin clear and free from spots.
3. He will be contented.
4. He will sleep peacefully.

5. His bowels will be yellow in colour—the appearance and consistency of yolk of egg.
6. He will cut his teeth without difficulty.

Exercise.—Every child requires exercise, and even in the house the youngest baby should be frequently “mothered” and carried about in the arms, as lying flat on the back for a prolonged period causes congestion of the lungs, and delays development of the muscles.

Up till the end of the third month the child should always be carried about in a reclining position both in and out of doors.

To support a young infant upright on the knee and jerk it up and down with the idea that it gives pleasure is barbarous, as gentle movement is pleasant to child or adult, but vigorous jolting is as unpleasant to a baby as it is to a grown-up person.

The baby must not be over-handled and treated as a plaything. He must not be shown off too much to visitors nor constantly nursed after the first two or three months, but placed on a *rezai* and allowed to *amuse himself* for short periods of the day. His vigorous kicking and crowing is the finest exercise imaginable.

Rest.—Rest is as essential to well-being as exercise, and a healthy young baby rests all day long, spending the whole of the interval between one feed and the other in sleep. As far as possible baby should, during the daytime, sleep in the open air, but of course he must not be exposed to the direct heat of the sun in this country. The amount of sleep required, steadily diminishes, and at the end of the second year twelve hours are usually more than sufficient, while later on ten or even nine hours are ample. Even the youngest baby is a creature of habit, and if fed at regular intervals will soon spend most of its time in slumber.

Each child must have a cot to himself, a small charpoy which can be obtained in the bazaar for a few annas is best. The ordinary Indian cradle cramps the child, and the mother must not have her infant in her own charpoy. As soon as baby gets up, the mattress and all bed covering should be aired for at least two hours daily. A mattress which is cool, cheap and easily renewed for children's cots may be made by loosely stuffing a bag of unbleached calico with finely cut chaff, *bhoosa* or cotton wool, all of which are very cheap in India. Covered by a *rezai* it can be placed on the floor for the baby to kick about on.

Restlessness and prickly heat are best avoided by the use of cool grass mats and pillows. During sleep the pillow should be frequently turned and a piece of folded muslin inserted between the baby's head and its damp surface.

6. BABY'S MIND.

One of the saddest, and alas, one of the commonest sights in India is the spoilt child. His parents, out of a misguided affection, weakness, or a desire for peace at any price, give him all that he wants; later on, when he comes to grips with life, its hardships will be all the harder for him because of the way he was “given in” to when young. The child who is allowed to rule the whole household will be unable to rule himself when he grows older.

A child's character begins to form when he is still in the cradle, and obedience must be insisted upon there as well as anywhere else. No child is too young to learn. If he is bored with lying in one position, or really needing attention, he will at first show it by becoming restless, then by slight whimpering, then crying. Attend to him before he gets to the crying stage. He must not think that he cannot get what he wants until he has cried for it. Obedience should be the parent's first law; if it is, the little one is likely to grow up a credit to his parents and to himself. Remember that the child who can best obey commands makes the man who can best give them. An obedient baby is far more likely to become a strong leader than a child who refuses to do everything and anything that he is told to do. The worrying, over-anxious, irritable mother will have a fretful, restless baby. The placid happy mother will have a contented baby.

7. BABY'S INDIAN AILMENTS.

Plenty of fresh air and sunshine, both of which are cheap and plentiful in India, are the best preventives of the ailments of babyhood.

If any place in the house is offensive, do not try to "hide the smell" by the means of odoriferous fluids and powders but employ the three all-powerful disinfectants—(1) sunlight, (2) boiling water, and (3) soap.

There are no microbes which can stand a combination of these three, and it is on them that Indian housekeepers should rely and not on chemical disinfectants.

Flies.—Visible insects (*kira*) have to be guarded against in India just as much as the invisible microbes of disease. The most dangerous *kira* is the common fly. If you watch a fly in the bazaar you will often see it sitting on pans (dung, manure), sucking up all kinds of dirty matter. It then flies across the road and settles on the mithai in the mithai-wala's shop. It drops its excreta on the sweets and often vomits as well, and both excreta and vomit contain dirty matter from the pans which frequently contain the germs of disease. The fly has hairy feet which also entangle dirty matter and drop it on clean food.

Flies are apt to sit on babies' eyes and often carry the infection of "sore eyes." They also sit on the skin and, dropping germs on any little scratches which may be there, cause ulcers and boils. For this reason when baby is sleeping he should be covered with a piece of thin *mulmul*. If he has the little charpoy of his own which we have recommended tie four bamboos to the four legs of the charpoy and lay the muslin over them, tucking it under baby's mattress.

Mosquitoes.—The bite of the mosquito carries the infection of malarial fever. Therefore baby should be protected from being bitten, and if he is put to sleep with his charpoy turned upside down and a piece of *mulmul* carefully folded over the legs it will protect him from the mosquitoes as well as from flies.

Vermin.—Body vermin such as fleas, bugs and lice are injurious to baby's health, as (1) they cause discomfort and loss of proper rest; (2) they cause injury to the skin with consequent possibility of dirt and infectious matter; (3) they may directly carry serious disease such as plague through their bites.

Fleas breed on rats, and in dust, so keep your house free from rats and dust for baby's sake.

Lice breed in dirty hair and dirty garments, especially woollen ones. Keep dirty people and dirty clothes out of your house for baby's sake.

(To be continued.)