

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE.

BABY IN INDIA.

By ROBERT J. BLACKHAM, C.I.E., C.B., D.S.O., M.D., KAISER-I-HIND
MEDALLIST FOR PUBLIC SERVICE IN INDIA, LATE HON. SURGEON TO THE
VICEROY.

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BOWEL COMPLAINTS.

The colour and consistency of the baby's motions should be carefully observed.

They are tarry and odourless for baby's first few days after birth, then gradually become the colour and consistency of yolk of egg. The following are commonest abnormal stools :—

1. *Green*—caused by chill or heralds diarrhoea. Give castor oil.
2. *Pasty white, tough and bulky*—indicate excess of undigested curd and wrong feeding.
3. *Curdy*.—Indicates wrong feeding.
4. *Clay-like or hard*.—Indicates fat intolerance.
5. *Frothy, foul or watery*.—Indicates fermentation of food and onset of diarrhoea.

Mucus may appear or the stools may be dark in colour. In every case where the stools are abnormal send for a doctor.

After the first few days the baby has two or three motions a day. If the bowels move less frequently the baby is constipated. This must be avoided as it tends to set up diarrhoea and is bad in itself. The mother or nurse must educate the bowels to act by the clock.

The causes of constipation are manifold. In breast fed babies it may be due to constipation in the mother, or to poor quality of her milk.

Constipation is often due to lack of fat in the milk and the addition of a little cream, maltine or fresh cocoanut oil to the dietary often acts like a charm.

A baby may have four motions in the 24 hours without it being considered excessive, but diarrhoea is a very serious matter in children, especially in warm climates, and if a small dose of castor oil followed by no food except water for three feedings fails to effect a cure, send immediately for the doctor.

It will do no harm to keep an infant on nothing but plain boiled water for as long as twenty-four hours if medical advice cannot be obtained, and indeed the first principle of all modern treatment of bowel complaints is to put as little food into the intestines as possible when they are in an inflamed condition.

Colic.—This is caused in breast fed babies by—

1. Maternal dietary indiscretions.
2. Over-exertion or excitement of the mother.
3. Irregular nursing.
4. Chill.

In bottle-fed babies it is caused by—

1. Irregular feeding.
2. Excessive feeding.
3. " Bolted bottles."
4. Stale milk.
5. Too much starch.

Dysentery.—This is one of the common bowel complaints of India and is due to infection from parasites which, swallowed with liquid or solid food, attack and injure the intestine. The chief symptoms are diarrhoea, the passage of blood and mucus in the stools and moderate fever. It is a most exhausting disease as poisonous substances are manufactured by the germs which attack the body generally. The germs which cause the disease are of different kinds, and what will cure one variety will do no good to another.

It is therefore imperative to call a doctor. Pending his arrival give the child a dose of castor oil.

Inflamed eyes.—In India inflammation of the eyes is more common than any other disease of childhood. Infection is caused (1) by poisonous germs carried by flies, or particles of sand and dust or (2) by direct contact with discharges of the parents or relatives.

The symptoms are pain, redness and watering of the eyes with dislike of bright light. If there is any matter in the discharge from the eye the case is serious and medical advice must be sought without delay.

Treatment should be started at once. Wash the eye with warm water in which a small quantity of boracic powder (a teaspoonful to the pint) has been dissolved.

Be careful not to touch the sound eye with the pledget used for washing the bad eye as infection is readily conveyed from one eye to the other.

Cover eye with a brown paper shade to exclude light.

Malaria—Is so prevalent in many parts of India, that quinine has become a household remedy. Two errors in its mode of use are often made :—(a) it is thought that quinine must not be given till the temperature has come down. In the ordinary mild forms of malaria, there is no harm in waiting till then, but in the severe form such delay is serious, so it is much wiser, as soon as

there is reason to believe that the fever is malarial, to begin by giving quinine regularly, whether the temperature is high at the time of administration or not.

(b) Too small doses of quinine are given to children, who need relatively more to cure their malaria than older people. A baby of six months will require one grain three times a day, and a child of one year will need double that amount.

It is best to give quinine powder dissolved in water and sweetened. If the child vomits after a dose of quinine, a smaller quantity should be tried and gradually increased. During an epidemic if the baby cannot be kept protected by a net from mosquito bites at night, give him twice a week, one or two grains of quinine powder after his first morning milk, and the same after his last evening feed.

Moue a Raha (Thrush).—This condition—not uncommon in babies under six months—consists of white patches which look like bits of milk curd, on the inside of the cheeks, on the tongue and on the palate. It is usually associated with dirty nipples, *chushnis*, or bottle teats. The best treatment is to wash out the mouth after each feed with boracic lotion. The best preventive is clean nipples or bottle teats, and *no chushni*.

Prickly Heat.—This is caused by excessive perspiration during damp hot weather and is often increased by irritation through thick garments next to a sensitive skin.

The baby should be clothed very lightly with a *mulmul kurta*. The milk must not be given too hot, as hot food increases sweating. The irritation may be greatly relieved by sponging with water in each quart of which a heaped tablespoonful of bicarbonate of soda has been dissolved. Soap must be avoided. Give the baby an oil bath daily, *i.e.*, rub fresh cocoanut oil gently into the whole body except the head and face.

May I end by asking mothers in India who love babies, to

“Bring as gifts of adoration
All that Science can impart.
Bring the skilful, watchful, gentle
Wise ones of the Healing Art.
Give them light and love and laughter,
Give them parents who are wise,
Holding in their hearts God's Vision
When he fashioned paradise.”

The future of India lies in the arms of Indian mothers.