

THERAPEUTICS OF DIARRHŒA IN CHILDREN.

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GENTLEMEN: I desire to call your attention to-day to diarrhœal troubles, especially those apt to affect children, not alone infants, but those under seven or eight years of age. It would be impossible to go over much of the subject in an hour; I shall therefore make my lecture suggestive, and touch only some of the most important points. Whatever the cause, all children, whether infants or those older, ought to be kept quiet when suffering from diarrhœa. They should be kept in a partially darkened, quiet room, free from noise, and all talk in the room should be avoided, especially when the child is asleep. The nervous system in childhood is so impressible it is easily disturbed, and any disturbance of this character aggravates the diarrhœa. Infants under one year ought to be kept lying down as much as possible. They should not be jolted up and down as is the custom of most nurses and some mothers, in order to amuse them. If the child is under one year, let it be placed on a pillow, if the diarrhœa is severe, as it can be kept quiet more easily in this way than when lying on the lap. Even in changing the napkin care should be taken to move the child as little as possible. Don't be afraid to keep the room well ventilated in which the child lies. Mothers usually are over-careful for fear the child may take cold, and on this account are apt to keep the room too closely shut up. When the child is awake it can be carried carefully into open air, always in the shade. Salt-air is beneficial to almost all forms of diarrhœa in children, and this is specially so in regard to city children. We in the city, therefore, urge a ride on the salt water, or taking the child to the sea-shore if possible. In all cases, in children under a year, if the diarrhœa is severe, keep warm applications over the abdomen; make a spice bag. Take a half ounce each of cloves, allspice, cinnamon, and anise seeds pounded, but not powdered, in a mortar, put these between two layers of coarse flannel, about six inches square, and quilt them in. Soak this for a few minutes in hot spirits (brandy, or whiskey, or alcohol), and water equal parts, and apply it to the abdomen warm, renewing it when it gets cool. In this way we not only get the effects of a poultice, but we also get the sedative and antiseptic effects of the spices. Great heat, with influences that depress the nervous system, bad hygienic surroundings, improper diet, too early weaning, bottle food, and dentition, are among the causes that predispose to diarrhœa. In all cases remove the cause if possible.

METHOD OF REDUCING TEMPERATURE.

There is one symptom common to almost all cases of diarrhœa if severe, and in my opinion it is the most important, and that is the increase of tempera-

ture. The best means of reducing the temperature is by the external applications of cold. Since we have the Kibbe's cot, which you have seen here, the immersion of the child in a bath is practically done away with. The Kibbe's cot can be improvised easily; it is a pleasant and convenient way of giving the wet pack; is just as effectual as the bath, and has very few of its objections. Fold a small sheet so that it will cover the child from the axilla to the ankles, place the child on the bed, leaving the arms and feet uncovered. The axilla can be dried easily, and the temperature be taken while the child is in the pack, or the thermometer may be introduced into the rectum, the most accurate way of taking the temperature. Water of the desired temperature may be poured on from a pitcher. In cases of slight elevation of temperature, say to 102° F., or under, sponging off the body with water about the temperature of 80° F. will usually answer the purpose, and it may be done often enough to reduce the temperature nearly to normal. But in all cases of an elevation of temperature above 102° resort to the Kibbe's cot or its substitute. Always remain and make the first application yourself. The parents will be timid about it. The child will cry, and it will be necessary for you to show them by the good effects produced, the wonderful power by this means of reducing temperature, of calming the restlessness and irritability of the child, and of inducing sleep.

Afterward you can teach them the use of the thermometer and the methods of application of the water. The temperature of the water may be at first 90° F., then gradually, as the child becomes accustomed to it, it may be made cooler until it is brought down to 80° F. in a few minutes. It may be necessary where the temperature is very high, or where it rapidly rises after it has been reduced, to apply the water even colder than 80°. Reduce the temperature to 99° F. It usually goes down still farther after the child is taken out. Remove the sheet, put the child in a thin blanket, cover it up and let it sleep. It may be left in the pack twenty or thirty minutes, longer or shorter according as you find the temperature down to 99° F. In very severe cases, where the temperature rises to 105° F., or higher, it may be necessary to apply the cold every hour or two. In such cases you need not remove the child from the Kibbe's cot, but let it remain there for even days if necessary. The cot may be made comfortable by folding a woollen blanket and putting it under the child. I cannot speak too emphatically of the importance of the reduction of temperature in the treatment of the diarrhœas of children, and of this means of accomplishing it. It is, however, only an aid to other means of treatment.

NURSING AS A CAUSE OF DIARRHŒA.

One of the most frequent causes of diarrhœa in young infants is too frequent nursing. The child when a few days old, can be taught to nurse about every two hours during the day, and every three hours at night. My first question, when I am