

## TREATMENT OF PRURITUS.

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There are certain regions which are very apt to be affected by a local pruritus, which at times is terribly distressing,—these are the anus and genital region. For this local itching one of the most effectual local measures which can be employed is hot water. And it should be used very hot, so that the application of it is uncomfortable to the hands. In pruritus of the anus and vulva, I direct that a cloth—as a handkerchief—shall be dipped in the water and held firmly against the part until the heat is dissipated, when the application is renewed once or twice more. The part is *not* to be bathed in the water, as the term is ordinarily used, but to be treated as above described. Care should be taken that the operation is not prolonged, and that the water is really hot, or a reaction sets in and the parts are weakened instead of strengthened by the water; two or three minutes generally suffices.

After the application of the water, some local remedy must be used at once, and the one perhaps most generally serviceable in lighter cases is carbolic acid, either in ointment or solution; ten to twenty grains to the ounce of cosmoline often gives great relief; it may, of course, be used much stronger. In pruritus ani, after the hot-water applications, I have repeatedly found the best application to be equal parts of the unguentum belladonnæ and the unguentum hydrargyri, well-rubbed together, and inserted on cotton batting as deeply as possible.

It must never be forgotten that the most obstinate and distressing pruritus ani may be due to the presence of minute cracks and fissures, and the very best method of relieving the itching is to pencil the fissures with a stick of nitrate of silver, tucking in a bit of cotton afterwards, under which they generally heal promptly and kindly. Nitrate of silver is also very conveniently and effectively applied in itching of the anus and genitals, in solution in the spiritus etheris nitrosi, of a strength of from five to twenty grains to the ounce. Very great relief—and I have seen cure to follow—is obtained in pruritus scroti from the following wash: R.—Bismurth. subnitrat., ʒij; acid

hydrocyan. dil., ʒij; misturæ amygdalæ, ʒiv; M. To be shaken and well applied. The poisonous character of the hydrocyanic acid must always be borne in mind, and the wash should not be used to surfaces largely abraded.

No little relief is afforded to pruritus, both local and general, from the compound of chloral and camphor, which I had the honour of introducing to the profession in this connection some time ago. It is formed by rubbing together the hydrate of chloral and powdered camphor in a mortar until a liquid results, and then adding this to ointment. Ordinarily a drachm of each in the ounce will be sufficient, but this amount may be doubled, if necessary; or sometimes a lesser quantity will suffice, while even that first mentioned may prove too stimulating. When applied to a denuded surface, this remedy causes considerable burning.

In intractable itching about the genitals, the possibility of a parasitic cause must always be borne in mind, and the crab-louse may sometimes be found when least suspected. A vegetable parasite may likewise be a cause of this distressing symptom, and a mild case of tinea trichophytina cruris—the eczema marginatum of Hebra—will often long pass unrecognized. Quite lately, Dr. Stevens, of Lebanon, Ohio, reported some cases of pruritus vulvæ cured by the local use of sulphurous acid; possibly in these cases the mucous membrane itself may be the seat of a parasite.

Caustic potash is a very valuable anti-pruritic, and when properly applied is of the greatest service in pruritus of the vulva. In weak solution,—ten to twenty grains to the ounce, with a little glycerine,—it may be applied freely, the parts being then covered with some mild unguent or the carbolic acid ointment, spread on linen and laid on, and tucked in between the labia. In stronger solution,—half a drachm to one or even two drachms to the ounce,—it is to be rubbed on less frequently, but more actively, with a view to produce abrasions of the surface, allow exudation, and thus to cause absorption of thickened tissue; the applications cause much burning, but the relief afforded to an obstinate pruritus quite compensates for this.