

must be kept at an even heat of 99 deg. Fahr.

The same observations apply to the giving of an enema to a patient suffering from peritonitis, it being important in both instances to avoid setting up any peristaltic action of the bowel. For this reason no soap or other intestinal irritant enters into the composition of these enemata.

NUTRIENT ENEMATA.

There are many cases, both surgical and medical in which it is impossible or undesirable to feed a patient either by mouth or nasal tube. Rectal feeding is then prescribed under the name of nutrient enemata. These must be given very slowly indeed by means of a not too flexible rubber catheter joined to a glass funnel or syringe. The piston of the latter should not be used, but the fluid allowed to flow gently into the bowel by the force of gravitation alone, the catheter being passed as far as possible into the rectum.

The temperature of the fluid to be injected should not exceed 96 deg. Fahr.

It must be remembered that no fluids can ascend the intestinal tract further than the ileo-cæcal valve, and that the large intestine has little, if any, digestive powers of its own. Absorption can only take place of a certain amount of water, alcohol, and salts in addition to some predigested substances such as peptonised milk and eggs. The latter when peptonised are very rapidly absorbed, and form a very valuable means of nourishment in cases when rectal feeding has to be relied upon. Solids are not absorbed, and it is therefore necessary to strain all nutrient enemata before administration, especially so if beef tea or meat essence be given, otherwise the solid particles will only irritate the mucous membrane lining the intestinal walls, and lead to the rejection of the enema.

In order that as much absorption as possible can take place, the fluid must be brought in contact with a large area of the walls of the intestine, and its secretion being alkaline and the food which reaches it in a normal manner from above being also slightly alkaline, it is usual to add a small quantity of bi-carbonate of soda to the prepared nutrient given by the rectum. The food ordered should be freshly prepared each time before administration and the process of peptonisation not stopped by boiling, as is usually done when predigested nourishment is given by mouth.

Nutrient enemata are best retained if given to the patient whilst he lies upon his back, and he should be instructed not to move at all for about an hour afterwards. Especial care is required in thus feeding a patient suffering from enteric fever, after perforation, no movement at all of his body must be permitted either during the process or after its completion.

The ingredients, quantities, and times of administration will always be prescribed by the physician in charge of the case. The usual quantity is ℥ iij every three hours, or, if it is well retained, ℥ iv. every four hours, and the customary prescription consists of—

Essence of beef or mutton ℥ ij
Yolk of one egg;
Milk, ad ℥ vi.

The mixture to be peptonised and strained before administration.

If a patient is to be fed by enemata for any length of time the bowel must be washed out daily with water; some authorities recommend the washing out to be performed before every nutrient enema is given, but unless this be specially ordered the nurse should not do so on her own responsibility, as it is liable to set up an irritable condition, and lead to the rejection of the nourishment.

The washing out is done by means of a syphon tube having a glass funnel attached. The tube, filled with water, is passed a good way up the rectum, about ℥ vj of water is poured through the funnel and allowed to gravitate into the bowel until it has nearly all disappeared. The nurse then nips the tube and depresses the funnel below the level of the mattress on which the patient is lying, holding a suitable vessel to catch the liquid as it returns. The process is repeated until the water comes away again quite clear.

In cases of collapse, and after hæmorrhage, especially hæmoptysis, saline injections are frequently given to raise arterial tension, give the heart something to contract upon, and to allay thirst. The right proportion consists of ℥ i salt to oʒ of distilled water. Oss is injected very slowly at a temperature of 99 deg. F. The injection can be repeated several times, waiting an interval of twenty minutes between each operation.

HELEN TODD.

The Queen Encourages Nurses.

Lord Mount-Edgcumbe presided recently at the annual meeting of the Cornwall County Nursing Association at Truro, and, in moving the adoption of the report, referred to the visit of the nurses to the Queen on the occasion of her Majesty's recent visit to Plymouth. Nothing could have been more gracious than the Queen's reception of them. At the suggestion of the superintendent nurse, he wrote a letter saying how very much gratified the nurses were, and he had a very kind letter saying that her Majesty was glad to hear they were pleased, and that the nursing of the poor was a matter in which she took the greatest interest.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)