

How to Choose a Disinfectant.

This is a question upon which trained nurses often seek information. It is the more important that they should be given an independent judgment on the matter, because attempts are now being made to fix the relative value of disinfectants by setting up an arbitrary standard, the power of any given preparation to kill so many germs of a particular disease, in a given time. This sounds very well in theory, but in practice it is very fallacious. To begin with, the theory ignores the whole trend and present work of medicine, to *prevent* disease if possible. If the whole design were to cure disease by killing the germs which cause it, it is more than possible that the patient would sometimes be poisoned before the germs which had attacked him. If the whole practice of disinfection resolved itself into the use of a mere death-dealing capacity, as all the very powerful germicides are deadly poisons, no better agent could be used than corrosive sublimate, which is many times more powerful than the strongest coal tar disinfectant, and only costs about 2s. 3d. per lb. It is so strong that, used dissolved in water, 1 part in 2,000, it may be trusted to do all that is required of it in that direction.

But, after all, human beings do not live on disinfectants; and measures of disinfection are only designed to preserve the health and assist in the cure of diseased persons. The real vital element to everyone, sick or well, is Oxygen—atmospheric Oxygen—because it is essential to the maintenance of life; and if the quantity of oxygen in our living and sick rooms be lowered ever so little, the patient's health and his chances of recovery from illness and disease are at once depreciated. The margin between plenty and insufficiency of oxygen is extremely small, and the smallest deficiency brings about lowered vitality, and induces a liability to the contraction of disease generally. It is then of the highest importance that the air we breathe in our living rooms, the rooms we sleep in, and in sick chambers more particularly, should be of the greatest attainable purity, that is to say it must be as rich as possible in Oxygen.

How do disinfectants stand in relation to this all-important consideration? Many of them absolutely suck up oxygen from the air and injure those who have to breathe it accordingly; whilst others, including all coal-tar preparations, even if they do not absorb oxygen in large quantities, do so in small amounts, and certainly do not increase, the available quantity. From this point of view, many disinfectants are really useless and consequently most expensive. But it would be just as fair to compare disinfectants on this standard as from their mere ability to kill so many germs in so many minutes.

In the use of disinfectants, there are other and very important qualities to be considered. Some are so poisonous that they are an actual source of danger. Others make such stains that their employment involves the ruin of sheets, valuable carpets, or articles of *vertu*; while others, again, may damage (by bleaching or otherwise) valuable pictures, or wall papers; and, finally, a few offend most grievously the

ordinary senses by their obnoxious odours or even dangerous emanations.

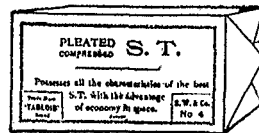
So all these, and other considerations besides, have to be taken into account in determining the relative value of disinfectants; and there can be no acceptable standardisation of disinfectants which, having regard to one quality only, ignores all others which are equally important and valuable. In short, assuming a preparation is *sufficiently powerful* as a germicide to do all that is required of it, that disinfectant is the most valuable which also oxidises or ozonises the air, and is the most free from objectionable qualities.

To explain our meaning let us take a well-known preparation which fulfils all these conditions—"Sanitas." Its germicidal qualities are beyond all doubt. They have been precisely determined by eminent authorities. "Sanitas Fluid" admits of dilution, for most purposes, with several times its own bulk of water before use. It can be taken internally in cases of dysentery, typhus and typhoid fever, and all intestinal and bladder troubles, which are caused by, or are connected with, micro-organisms. In this latter respect, indeed, it almost stands alone. It automatically gives off nascent oxygen to the air when distributed by the spray or otherwise, thus affording a benefit to sick persons that cannot be over-estimated. It is absolutely non-poisonous to men and animals, is fragrant, and does not stain linen or hands.

We fully recognise the value of other preparations, each of which has perhaps its special field of employment. We quote "Sanitas" as a well-known example of a disinfectant of universal usefulness, and to prove our contention that there are many points to be considered in choosing a disinfectant, and that any attempt to choose such a preparation for any single reason alone, would be a grave mistake.

Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome, and Co.'s Specialities.

The Pleated Compressed Sanitary Towels (Tabloid Brand) supplied by Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome, and Co., Snow Hill Buildings, London, E.C., should



be known to all travellers as the extremely small space which they occupy makes them particularly convenient. As may be known from the reputation of the firm which supplies them, the materials used in making them are of the best quality, and possess highly absorbent qualities. After being highly compressed they are enclosed in an effective protective covering, by means of which perfect cleanliness is secured. They are issued in four sizes in packages of one dozen.

The same firm is also issuing in the Tabloid form, which is their speciality, compressed Rhubarb Extract made from the Wellcome Brand Extract of Rhubarb, which is the result of a special process whereby the full therapeutic value of the rhubarb is retained.

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