

The Care of Milk During Hot Weather.

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There is no article of food of such general utility in the sick room as milk. Not only does it form the principal food of patients on low diet, but it is given freely to invalids and convalescents, either as a beverage or as a component part of puddings and soups.

Without entering into a long discussion concerning the value of milk as food, a few hints connected with the care of it in hot weather may be of service, for milk, being a fluid of animal origin, is very easily decomposed, and thus soon becomes dangerous to health. The decomposition of milk is brought about by lactic fermentation, and may be recognised by the formation of curds, which give forth an acid smell, and then one of a more unpleasant nature, and at this latter stage the milk is distinctly dangerous and liable to cause sickness and diarrhoea.

Milk has also a power of absorption by which it quickly takes unto itself all strong odours, such as cheese, onions, herbs, etc., without coming into actual contact with the articles, while its power of absorbing sewer gas and other impurities is equally remarkable. Such absorption can generally be detected by the flavour of the milk, but not always where the absorption is of sewer gas, since the most dangerous sewer gases are without smell. Another kind of absorption which is more dangerous is not so easily recognised, and that is the absorption of the disease germs which give rise to cholera, consumption, enteric, and scarlatina. Milk also forms a haven for various fungi and moulds, which when in a vital condition may cause gastric irritation, and if the fungus happens to be the *oidium albicans*, it may attack the mouth and digestive tract of an infant, and give rise to thrush, unless the mouth is kept clean and free from traces of milk after a meal.

Thus milk requires special care at all times, and particularly in warm weather, when all forms of bacterial life are most active, for without such care the milk may fail in its function as a valuable food, and become a source of disease. Active measures are being taken in certain quarters to bring about an improvement in the matter of the supervision and control of the milk supplies, but until such improvement is ensured, it rests with each individual to obtain the milk from as sanitary a source as possible, and, when once it has entered the house, to guard it from any further

contamination.

All vessels in which milk is kept should be scalded with soda water after each time of use. They should then be rinsed in cold water, dried on a cloth, and left exposed to the air instead of being shut up in a dark cupboard.

The milk itself should be kept in a cool, clean, well-ventilated place, and in the homes of the poor where larder accommodation is meagre, it should be placed in a covered vessel in a cool corner of the window-sill, instead of being shut up in a warm living room. The milk can be kept cool in the copper when it is not in use for washing purposes. A lump of ice wrapped in several folds of flannel will keep the air of the copper cool, and will last a long time, thereby converting the copper into an inexpensive refrigerator. If ice cannot be obtained, the milk vessel should stand in a larger one containing cold water. A piece of clean flannel should cover the milk vessel and just dip in the water, and the evaporation from the exposed surface will keep the milk cool.

It is not well to add preservatives, such as boric acid, salicylic acid, or carbonate of soda to milk, as it has been proved that large quantities of such preservatives, or even the continued use of small doses, have an injurious effect upon the body. A better method of preserving the milk is to boil it, but as boiling renders the milk poorer and less digestible, besides destroying the anti-scorbutic properties of fresh milk, the best plan of all is to sterilise it.

If the milk is required for immediate consumption, its sterilisation is a very simple matter, but if it has to be sterilised so that it will keep indefinitely, special apparatus is required. A temperature below boiling point is sufficient to destroy the disease-producing germs found in milk, and experiments have proved that the following simple plan will render milk sterile for immediate use without greatly altering its character or flavour. Place a pint, or any convenient quantity, of milk in a covered can, such, for instance, as that in which the milkman leaves the milk. Place the can in a saucepan containing cold water, which shall stand as high outside the can as does the milk inside it. Bring the water to the boil and allow it to boil for five minutes. An alternative method is to place the can in a similar quantity of boiling water, and to allow the boiling to continue for a quarter of an hour. Place the milk-containing vessel on ice, or in a pan of cold water, so as to cool it rapidly, and when cold, strain the milk to remove the layer of coagulated albumen, before the bulk of the cream has had time to rise and attach itself to the film of the surface.

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