

Lectures on the Nursing of Lung Diseases.

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CHAPTER IV.

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As soon as the crisis of the illness is over, in an ordinary case of Pneumonia, the diet is of equal importance; because the patient's strength requires to be restored as speedily as possible. In many instances, the patient then becomes ravenous for food, and there is no difficulty whatever in feeding him. But, if the illness has been at all prolonged, and the general health has been much shattered, convalescence is often delayed by the total want of appetite which the patient displays. Then, it will rest largely with the nurse to devise dishes which shall tempt him to eat, and so assist in the quick and complete restoration of his strength.

It is a good rule in such cases never to give much nourishment at a time, and that given should always be presented in the most dainty and appetising manner possible. A patient, for example, will take twice the amount of food if it is given to him in an appetising manner, and in small quantities, than if a big plateful of nourishment is placed before him at ordinary meal times. This is certainly one reason why private patients, who are properly nursed, generally recover so much more quickly, and more certainly, from such an illness as Pneumonia, than hospital patients usually do. The advice as to always giving stimulants, when these are ordered, with nourishment, upon which stress has already been laid, need not be now repeated. There are two great incentives to appetite, however, of which nurses, as a rule, are not sufficiently aware—Fresh Air and Pure Water. The more fresh air the patient can be supplied with, the better his blood is oxygenated, the more rapidly does the stomach recover its powers, and the more quickly does a natural appetite return. This is a practical fact after all illnesses; but it is especially true after those which have affected the lungs. With regard to water, this may be said to serve two great purposes. It flushes out the systemic canals, and fills the blood vessels. It, therefore, dissolves and removes the mucus which catarrh of the stomach causes

to be deposited on its mucous membrane, and which not only interferes with the processes of digestion, but diminishes the secretion of the gastric juices which increase the sensation of hunger. By flushing the kidneys, waste products are removed from the system, the accumulation of which not only tend to retard complete recovery, but also to cause more or less disturbance, or even disease, in the kidneys themselves. By filling the blood vessels with fluid, it again serves a double purpose. It increases the nutrition of the heart itself, as well as of all the other tissues of the body; and it also restores the power of the nervous system, upon which the due performance of all the bodily functions so greatly depend. And, finally, water has the great practical advantage of diluting the bile and encouraging its flow from the gall bladder into the intestines; with the consequent advantages of the better digestion of the food, and of rendering the intestines more moist and their secretions more abundant, whereby the proper regulation of the bowels is materially assisted. All these great practical results, then, are obtainable by persuading the patient to take fluids freely. Sometimes there is no trouble about this, but often, and especially in the case of women, the difficulty is very considerable; and then tact on the part of the nurse is invaluable. For example, if she can induce the patient to take his allotted stimulants well diluted with water, it will not be difficult to persuade him to take three pints of fluid in the twenty-four hours; and, if there is any tendency to acidity, or heart-burn, as so frequently happens in these cases, half a tumblerful of hot water with half a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda, dissolved in it, taken the last thing at night, will often save the patient considerable discomfort, and by washing out the stomach will assist materially in the better digestion of the next meal. Most patients prefer the table waters of Apollinaris or Rosbach to ordinary water, and Salutaris water has special advantages of its own in all these cases. Natural waters are loaded of course with salts. Salutaris is distilled water, and therefore is entirely free from such constituents. It is therefore able to dissolve a much larger quantity of the solids which are excreted by the body than ordinary water can do, and it is therefore more useful in these cases, when waste products have to be removed from the system as speedily as possible.

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