

thus fed should be given a teaspoonful of fresh fruit juice (orange or grape) which is a powerful antiscorbutic.

#### CONSTIPATION.

This is one of the minor troubles to which infants and young children are very liable, whether they are fed by the breast or artificially, though it is more common in the latter cases. Constipation is the cause of many attacks of restlessness, flatulence, colic, vomiting, sleeplessness, and numerous other symptoms, which will not disappear till the bowels are regularly and sufficiently opened. In some cases there is a weakness of the muscles of the bowel, but the motions are normal; and in these a small soap suppository will often ensure an action. But this treatment should not be adopted too frequently or continued for long, as it is unwise to habituate the bowel to require an abnormal stimulus to perform its normal function. It is more frequently found, however, that constipation exists with dry, pale stools with much mucus, passed with great straining and perhaps accompanied by blood; and the action may occur only every two or three days. These children may be fat, but they are never healthy and frequently are anæmic.

A frequent cause of constipation in breast-fed children is a deficiency of fat in the mother's milk; and in obstinate cases a specimen of this is generally examined by the doctor to determine whether this be the cause. Again, constipation is often an hereditary complaint. Mothers who habitually suffer in this way may have children of similar habit. Then drugs, especially sedatives, taken by the mother may be the cause of constipation in the infant; or, again, too large quantities of milk may produce irregularity of the bowels—constipation alternating with diarrhœa.

The condition in any case demands the careful attention of the nurse. If the child is breast-fed, it is necessary that the mother's bowels should act daily and regularly, and, if necessary, she must take some simple laxative, such as cascara sagrada. For the infant, a little fluid magnesia may be all that is necessary. The abdomen of the child should be rubbed gently by the nurse in the direction of the large intestine; that is, beginning at the lower part of the abdomen on the right side, move the hand upward to the ribs on the right side, then across above the navel to the left side, and thence downwards towards the pelvis; this will often

excite their action. A little oatmeal finely ground and added to the bottle may also be useful as a laxative.

An enema of  $\text{ʒi}$  of glycerine, or a little olive oil, may be used. It is a bad thing for the child to get accustomed to taking medicine for constipation, but occasionally a dose of two or three grains of carbonate of magnesia, or a teaspoonful of fluid magnesia, will be very useful. A few doses of cod liver oil in some cases may help to establish a regular evacuation. In children, who are taking a mixed diet, this must be regulated. Stewed fruits of various kinds, especially apples, prunes, figs, etc., are useful, so is oatmeal porridge given in the morning with cream. So also are green vegetables, while sweets and pastry are harmful. Of medicines, a useful and effectual one is "sal mineralis," given in water the first thing in the morning, and this has the great advantage of being tasteless, while the other mineral waters on account of their saline flavour are not so readily taken by children.

A good nurse will generally be able in a mild case of constipation to obtain the necessary action of the bowels by diet and massage of the abdomen, or occasional small doses of magnesia without the necessity of using stronger means of purgation. Constipation is one of the commonest of the minor troubles of children, and the nurse must, therefore, be constantly on her guard to prevent its occurrence or continuance.

*Enemata.* This will be a suitable place to make a few remarks on the subject of enemata, as the administration of these constitutes an important duty of a nurse.

Enemata are of various kinds purgative, astringent, antiseptic, nutrient and parasiticide.

Purgative Enemata generally consist of soap and water in the proportion of two ounces of soap to a pint of warm water. The soap should be made into a lather. The amount that may be injected ranges with the age of the patient from two or three ounces upwards. It should be injected very steadily through the nozzle of a ball syringe in young children or by a Higginson's syringe in older ones. If the injection is intended to reach high into the bowel a large soft catheter may be attached to the nozzle of the syringe and introduced. The whole of the part introduced should be smeared with vaseline. If desired a few teaspoonfuls of olive oil, or a teaspoonful of spirits of turpentine or the yolk of an egg may be added to the first part of the soap and water injected.

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