

The Nursing of Children's Diseases.

By J. PORTER PARKINSON, M.D., M.R.C.P.

Physician to the North-Eastern Hospital for Children and to the London Temperance Hospital, etc.

LECTURE II.

DISORDERS OF DIGESTION.

(Continued from page 144.)

Diarrhœa.—Some diseases causing the occurrence of this symptom have already been mentioned, and there are many others in which it may be a very prominent sign; such, for instance, as scarlet or typhoid fevers, blood poisoning or inflammation of the bowels. Infants at the breast often suffer from diarrhœa, owing to carelessness in feeding on the part of the mother, or owing to the taking of improper food by the mother, or to emotional disturbance on her part, such as anger or grief. The child is then usually irritable, restless, and sleepless. It draws up its legs as if in pain, the abdomen is disturbed, the stools may be curdled, or green, and are often slimy; the child wastes and the skin appears loose on the subcutaneous tissues. This condition may become chronic and lead to general malnutrition and atrophy, often combined with signs of rickets. Sometimes the diarrhœa may be more severe, with much straining and the passage of blood, as well as mucus, and in these cases the bowel may protrude after each motion. If this is the case the nurse should wash it with tepid water and a soft sponge, and replace it gently with the fingers. Occasionally this process is rendered easier by previously anointing it with a little vaseline. The child should not be allowed to sit up during defœcation, but the motions should be passed into a napkin with the child lying on its back. The doctor's attention should always be called to the condition. In many instances a little less food than normal and small doses of fluid magnesia or rhubarb and soda are sufficient to cure the trouble.

Whenever diarrhœa continues the food should be carefully sterilized.

In severe cases, milk may be stopped altogether for the time and veal broth substituted, or a mixture such as one of the two following:—

Arrowroot water 2 oz.	} or {	Barleywater 10 oz.
Whey 2 oz.		White of egg $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
White sugar, 1 tea-spoonful		White sugar 1 tea-spoonful

A small dose of castor oil is very useful at the outset, as the condition is often produced by the presence of some undigested or fermenting food.

A few drops of brandy are useful if there be much pain or drawing up of the legs.

INTESTINAL WORMS.

Thread worms are the most common of these parasites. They inhabit chiefly the lower part of the intestines. They may be taken in with food, but are generally spread by the ova adhering to the fingers, and under the finger nails of those infected with them. They are apt to crawl out of the anus, and adhere to its neighbourhood, causing irritation and scratching, and the ova are then conveyed by the fingers to the mouth and nostrils, or to other children, and in the case of two children sleeping together may be readily transferred from one to the other. They may be seen in the motions like little pieces of white thread, and if alive move about actively. The symptoms they cause are very variable, the most common, as already said, is itching, irritation round the anus or vagina, with perhaps some discharge of mucus and blood. They cause, therefore, much restlessness, especially at night, and perhaps vague pains in the abdomen.

The motions generally contain mucus, and there is very often also some nocturnal incontinence of urine. The treatment usually adopted is to give a brisk purge in order to drive the worms to the lower part of the bowel and expel as many as possible. Then, after the bowels have been freely opened, a large enema of infusion of quassia is administered, which will kill many of the worms left behind in the bowel. Salt and water, or strong tea, are sometimes used instead of the quassia, but are not quite so efficacious. Great care should be taken to see that the buttocks and genitals are kept free from worms and ova by frequent washing with soap and hot water, and the child's finger nails should be cut quite short to prevent the skin being broken by scratching. If the vulva be inflamed it and the vagina also is usually gently syringed with weak carbolic lotion and a little of a mixture of equal parts of vaseline and white precipitate ointment is used as an external application, and a little of the same ointment may with advantage be smeared round the anus so as to kill any worms that may stray out. This treatment is steadily continued till all thread worms have disappeared from the motions.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)