

The Nursing of Children's Diseases.

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LECTURE IV.

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Measles is an exceedingly infectious disease, so much so that most children suffer from it at some time or other. The poison is given off in the breath and secretions, and may be conveyed to a distance by clothes which have been in contact with anyone suffering from measles. The poison is not so persistent as that of scarlet fever and appears to be much more easily destroyed. The incubation of measles is most often ten days, but it may be a little longer.

The early symptoms are those of a feverish cold, sneezing, watering at the eyes and nose, and a frequent hacking cough.

The temperature rises the first day of the illness to about 102° F. or 103° F., then often falls for a couple of days to increase again on the fourth day. It remains high for about two days and then in cases without complication falls somewhat suddenly to normal or thereabouts and convalescence begins.

The child has headache and the usual febrile symptoms, the throat is reddened but not as a rule painful. The rash comes out on the fourth day of the illness on the forehead, temples and backs of the ears, and extends to the body and limbs. It consists of slightly raised red spots surrounded by reddened skin, and it runs together to form crescents. It is considerably larger than the scarlet fever rash; at the end of the week it fades and is followed by a slight branny desquamation.

If the fever does not abate at the usual time some complication is present; one of the most severe of these is the form of inflammation of the lungs known as broncho-pneumonia. In such a case the child will appear very ill, drowsy and apathetic, breathing rapidly, and the temperature may be high.

Another complication is *otitis media*, causing the same symptoms as in scarlet fever, viz., pain at the side of the head, deafness, and possibly a discharge of pus from the external ear.

Inflammation of the larynx is very common in measles and causes much hoarseness of voice, cough, and perhaps noisy, stridulous breathing. In such a case the nurse may have to put the child into a cot protected by curtains, and may be ordered to keep the surrounding

air moist with steam from a bronchitis kettle. She must watch the breathing very carefully as sometimes the obstruction to respiration may be so great as to endanger life, and a surgeon may have to be called in to perform tracheotomy in order to prevent death from suffocation.

Diarrhoea is not an uncommon complication in the hot weather, and it may be very severe; mucus and blood being passed. The general nursing of measles is simple, and consists chiefly in guarding the child from all cold, keeping the room at an even temperature of about 65° F.; moistening the atmosphere with a steam kettle if the cough be hard and irritating.

An ordinary fever diet of milk and milk puddings, etc., may be given. Demulcent drinks, as barley water, or black current tea, or glycerine and black currant lozenges are useful to allay the cough. In severe cases when the rash does not come out properly, the doctor may order a warm mustard bath, consisting of a table-spoonful of mustard to each gallon of water at 100° F. The child should be kept in three minutes, then quickly dried and placed between blankets. This has often the effect of bringing out the rash, and relieving the congestion of internal organs such as the lungs, etc.

Alcohol may have to be given if the pulse be small and rapid and the tongue dry and brown showing extreme prostration. During convalescence, that is to say, after the first ten days or so when the patient is kept in bed, the child should be kept in the sick room, the period of complete isolation should be at least six weeks.

Measles is very apt to leave some pulmonary weakness and tuberculosis or empyema; and enlarged glands frequently occur after it. Hence the necessity for extreme care for some time and the advisability of complete change of air, preferably to the seaside, afterwards.

Measles is so infectious, even in the very early stage, before the diagnosis has been made, that it is always necessary to prevent the other children of the household attending school, as it is very likely they may be also sickening for the disease. The usual disinfection of the sick room, clothes and bedding is, of course, necessary.

German Measles, or Rubella, is a rather mild disease, resembling measles or scarlet fever in many ways, but it is a distinct disease and does not protect the patient from either. It occurs in epidemics, which vary very much in

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