

The Nursing of Children's Diseases.

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LECTURE XI.

Eczema is exceedingly common in infants, especially during the first year of life, it may occur from irritation of urine round the buttocks and scrotum, or from excessive perspiration in the neck and armpits, etc. It is often dependent on dyspepsia or diarrhoea, and in some cases it may be hereditary. It consists of red patches on which are seen very small elevations, often containing a speck of fluid and then called vesicles, they itch and if irritated burst, and scabs form, beneath which the inflammation may extend. If very chronic the patches may not be moist, but dry and scaly with some thickening of the skin. The first point in treatment is the prevention of eczema in infants subject to it. The water for the child's bath should be soft, and the soap of good quality; Vinolia soap is good. After careful drying the skin should be thoroughly powdered. If there be a rash about the buttocks the bowels should be carefully attended to, and the parts kept thoroughly clean and dry (for cleaning, a little thin gruel may be better than soap and water) then dusted with boric acid powder or equal parts of oxide of zinc and starch. In bad cases it is often useful to spread lint with equal parts of boracic ointment and vaseline, and cover the affected parts with this, tucking in the lint between any folds of skin to prevent irritation by contact. In acute eczema of other parts soothing lotions are useful, such as lead or calamine lotion, and such lotions should be frequently dabbed on and allowed to dry, when they leave a deposit covering over the inflamed part, and protecting it and aiding healing. For dry eczemas, especially about the face, boracic ointment gently rubbed in is very useful. It may be mentioned here, that in eczema as in all skin eruptions, it is useless to make any application over a scab, where such exist they should be softened with a little warm olive oil and detached before the treatment is proceeded with.

In cases of acute eczema in infants it is

often necessary to limit the ingestion of starch and sugar.

It is very important to prevent the rash being scratched and mittens may be placed on the hands for this purpose, or it may be necessary to secure the arms by means of bandages.

Impetigo is the name given to a vesicular rash which may be often pustular and frequently scabs; beneath this ulceration may extend and produce deep ulcers. It may be due to any form of irritation, such as parasites, or bad feeding or over feeding &c, and there is a special form which is contagious and may run through a household and be attended with fever and slight general illness.

The treatment is to remove the scabs by poulticing or applications of warm oil, and then after washing with an antiseptic lotion to dress with white precipitate ointment on lint. The child's nails should be cut short and scratching should be prevented for the disease is spread in this way by self inoculation.

Cod liver oil is generally given internally.

Boils are common in children and cause often much pain and depression. They are sometimes the result of over feeding the child, especially with over much meat; but this is not as a rule the case, they are usually due to depression of health and are best treated by generous diet and often change of air is necessary.

Poultices are most usually employed, but they often lead to the production of other boils in the neighbourhood of the original one, the part may be kept moist by lint soaked in lead lotion or carbolic oil, the head may be removed when it appears and the part well washed with carbolic lotion. Maltine or cod liver oil is very useful internally, and any faults of diet must be corrected.

Psoriasis is a frequent skin disease in childhood and is often hereditary. It is similar in children to the same disease in adults and forms patches, varying in size, of red thickened skin covered with scales and is commonest on the limbs especially on the backs of the elbows and the front of the knees, and on the scalp. It is very apt to recur again and again. It is usually treated by the internal administration of arsenic and the rubbing into the patches of some stimulating ointment, such as the white precipitate ointment or a tar ointment, after the scales have been removed by warm baths and green soft soap.

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