

The Diet and Care of Hand-fed Children under 2 Years of Age.

INTRODUCTION.

So much has recently been written on Infant Feeding, that I hesitate before writing on the same subject. Still, as a friend said to me the other day, "I am a good man of business, I own, but I am always learning something from other people." So let my apology be a great love for little children, after twelve years' steadfast work in their midst.

And here I begin to strike the keynote of this article—already I have hinted the word experience.

The following suggestions as to feeding are culled from a wide source and field of observation, and were learned under the direction of a baby-feeding specialist, who advocated the spread of this knowledge amongst nurses, and those in charge of the young.

A few hints on care and management are given, but space only permits of a mere reference to these subjects.

Quantity of Food up to the Fourth Month.

It would first be well to remember that about 6 drachms is the quantity of fluid that can be best retained in the stomach of a newborn child, a feed of this quantity should be given two-hourly. By the fourteenth day the feed may have been increased to 15 drachms, and up to 2 ounces at the end of one month. The gradual increase in quantity may then be about 1 ounce a month, at three months making the feed 4 ounces 2½-hourly; at four months, 6 ounces 3-hourly.

Additions to Feed.

It is well that about 3 drachms of hot water should be given 10 minutes before food; this aids digestion. To each feed under six months or nine months, the addition of lime water 1 drachm. Sugar (white) half a teaspoonful, and a pinch of salt is advocated, with the exception of the first feed, when the lime water should be 20 minims, and the sugar less in proportion. It is sometimes well to increase the lime water to half an ounce, after the third month, if the state of the bowels require it, for a few feeds.

Milk Supply.

The quality of the milk (cow's) should be carefully noticed. It is well to thoroughly go into the sanitary condition of the farm from which it is procured. The utmost vigilance must be exercised that all utensils in which it is conveyed are thoroughly cleansed; a cool, shaded, ventilated dairy is the best place in which to keep it.

At the present day it is an open question whether sterilised or non-sterilised milk is most used; personally, I prefer non-sterilised, but if in doubt of supply then for safety sterilise; again, it is lighter thus treated.

All water given should be of undoubted purity, and barley water (Robinson's Patent Barley is good for this purpose) may be used after the fourth month with advantage.

Strength of Feeds.

Of course, the quantity of milk, also cream, must largely depend on the individual baby. The weight of the baby will be a guide under six months, and the progress of dentition must be consulted afterwards. Always feed to the teeth is a good rule.

At the 1st week: With water 5 drachms put milk 1 drachm.

At a fortnight: With water 12 drachms put milk 3 drachms.

At 1 month: Increase milk to 4 drachms.

At 2 months: Water 2 ounces with milk 1 ounce.

At 3 months: Water 2 ounces with milk 2 ounces.

After this the quantity and not quality is altered until the sixth month is reached. Cream should be given a few drops at a time to start with, watching the stools until 1 drachm is taken well at a feed.

Feeds at and after Six Months.

At six months six feeds may be given in 24 hours, and one feed of Mellin's Food may be added to the milk diet, which should include one pure milk feed.

When I get a baby of, say six months, into my hands, I start it at a three or four months' feed, or even less if ill-developed or under-weighted, and then gradually increase to the feed for the age.

There is no royal road to baby-feeding; one must diverge often from the beaten track.

At the seventh month Allen and Hanburys' No. 3 food (malted) is of great value, and at this time one feed of rusk and milk should be added. I may here mention the care needed in preparing rusk and milk.

The nurse should soak the rusks in cold water for half an hour, then the water may be drained off, and enough milk may be added to cover the biscuit; this should simmer for half an hour, and be then boiled up, sieved, beaten, and sweetened, and should then be the consistency of cream, or more dilute if taken from a bottle.

At the eighth month, to the foregoing feeds may be added at mid-day a little beef tea or broth, followed by rusk and milk.

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