

rennet ferment clots are formed from the milk, those of human milk not being so dense as those formed from cows' milk. The pepsin and hydrochloric acid act on proteid matter and convert it into peptones and albumoses. The stomach begins to empty half an hour after it is filled, and digestion in the case of human milk takes place in about an hour and a half, or, where cows' milk is used, in two hours. Much food passes from the stomach into the intestines without being broken down. Here it is acted on by other juices, such as those of the pancreas, trypsin ferment, and starch ferment. It is particularly necessary to call attention to the starch ferment because it does not exist in an infant until the age of five or six months is reached. This is the second of Nature's indications that starchy foods should not be given to infants under six months of age. It is the best and only reason for impressing on mothers the necessity for withholding starchy food.

The function of the bile is to act on the fats and sugars and breaks them up into minute particles. All digestion culminates in absorption, and this is what happens to the food which has been rendered easy of assimilation by the action of the various digestive juices. The residuum is best quickly excreted. The stools of an infant are a book for the nurse to read. She should know what the child passes, and what its appearance indicates. When an infant is taking cows' milk the stools are larger, paler, and firmer, and there is more undigested matter. They may be white, hard, and crumbling; there may be constipation and straining; they may contain undigested proteid matter, or a large quantity of starch may be passed undigested when the infant is fed on food which it cannot digest.

If a mother is unable to feed her child, a food easily assimilable must be obtained. Milk, and milk only, fulfils this qualification. The fat and sugar in milk supply heat and energy, the proteid repairs the waste in the tissues, and supplies the muscular energy. The proteid matter in cow's milk is harder to digest than in human milk. The actual constituents in both milks are the same, but the proportions different; in human milk, the fat is 4 per cent., the sugar 6 per cent., and the proteid 2 per cent. By dieting the mother it is, however, possible to alter the proportion of these ingredients; thus by a diet which includes plenty of fat cream, milk, butter, and farinaceous food, the fat may be increased to as much as 6 per cent. By a proteid diet, combined with exercise, the fat is reduced, and the proteid matter increased.

Nurses cannot too strongly urge upon

mothers the desirability of feeding their own children; by so doing the percentage of infant mortality can be decreased. It is thus a duty before the confinement to represent this strongly. You may be told that the mother never has and never will be able to nurse her child; but you should impress upon her the desirability of making an effort at the present time, and suggest that it may be possible by regulating the diet.

After many years' experience of working mothers I have arrived at the conclusion that roughly four things are necessary. Milk, meat, oatmeal, and cocoa instead of tea. With the exception of meat, the other things are obtainable every day by most expectant mothers, and should be taken for three or four months before confinement, and six months after. In town life, there are many things working against breast feeding, but oatmeal is a very cheap food, and admirable to nurse upon, and oatmeal gruel twice a day should be included in the diet of the mother before confinement as well as after. It is especially necessary to urge upon mothers not to attempt to nurse a baby on a diet of bread and tea. The result to the child is semi-starvation. Other points are the necessity for feeding at stated intervals, and the necessity for avoiding such things as alcohol, pickles, and strong coffee.

Another point to be remembered is that purgatives taken by a nursing mother are excreted in the milk, and therefore it is of importance that one which is not injurious to the child should be selected. Epsom salts, which are a favourite purgative with working class mothers, should be prohibited. When it is alleged that the mother's milk does not suit the baby it frequently happens that symptoms which are actually those of over-feeding are mistaken for those of under-feeding. Discomfort is generally a sign of over-feeding. If the child is restless, flabby, and losing flesh the question of mixed feeding, or of weaning may have to be considered. All patent foods should be avoided, and modified cows' milk used. The reason for modification is to obtain the same proportions as in human milk. Roughly speaking, in cows' milk the fat, sugar, and proteids are all four per cent. We have already seen that the proteids in human milk are two per cent., therefore by diluting the milk with an equal proportion of water the right proportion of proteid is obtained, but the milk then becomes deficient in fat and sugar, which must be added.

A better plan, however, than adding fat in the form of cream is to make use of the cream already in the milk by allowing this to stand in a tall vessel until the cream has risen into the upper layers, and then to use the top layers.

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