

Medical Matters.

THE WEANING OF INFANTS.

In a book on the care of young children Professor Behrens, as reported by the Budapest correspondent of the *British Medical Journal*, says the usual time for weaning a baby is at the end of the first year; but if the child is thriving and has already proved itself capable of digesting cow's milk, it may be done a couple of months earlier, provided that it is not during the heat of summer. The weaning should never take place immediately before or after the warm weather; roughly speaking, therefore, it should not be attempted from the month of May to the end of September. Prolonged lactation is dangerous, causing both ill-development of the child's bones, and delay in his dentition. The weaning should be very gradual; and during the first year the child should be fed solely on milk, since soups, vegetables, wine, etc., are apt to cause rickets. As regards the mother, during the critical period of weaning her child every care should be taken to avoid fatigue, whilst the breasts should be swathed in a cotton binder, and gently rubbed with warm, sweet almond oil both morning and evening. There is no necessity for the use of purgatives; but the patient should be careful to diminish the quantity of fluids in her diet. During the second year, in fact, until the appearance of the twentieth tooth, the child's dietary should consist of milk, eggs, and bread, the latter including not only the various forms of bread, but also cereals. Towards the end of the second year a purée of potato may occasionally be given in small quantities. The main food for a child is milk, and a child of twelve months old should take about a quart a day, a quantity which ought not to be exceeded during the second year. The greatest care should be exercised to avoid overfeeding, which is more frequently the cause of insufficient nourishment than underfeeding. At first a simple gruel should be given once daily, with only sugar and salt added; later on it should be given twice a day, with the addition of a little butter. When, in the course of time, eggs take their place in the nourishment of the child, the yolk alone should be given mixed with the gruel or milk; later the whole egg can be used. But it should be remembered that eggs are often the cause of constipation. Until the child has cut his twentieth tooth his diet should be very closely watched during the summer months.

The discomfort of the weaning period which is dreaded by many mothers for their infants can be much mitigated by judicious management.

Disinfectants, their Relative Values and Uses.*

Formaldehyde, sulphur, bichloride of mercury, and carbolic acid are most efficient as disinfectants. Formaldehyde and sulphur, for general disinfection of infected houses, rooms and contents, dead bodies, public places, steam and electric cars, in fact, wherever disinfection is required; bichloride of mercury, for disinfection of hands, face, hair and beard of an exposed person, the surface disinfection of body, also for infected linen and clothing before washing same, and all infected discharges; carbolic acid for surface disinfection of the body, infected bedding and linen, sinks, cesspools, toilet and wash-rooms, cuspidors, and all infected discharges.

As these disinfectants do not serve identical purposes equally well, but vary as to character, use, and merit, let us consider each by itself.

Formaldehyde ranks first as a general disinfectant, because it achieves the certain destruction of disease-causing germs in the shortest time, with least expense and trouble, and with a minimum amount of injury to the articles to be disinfected. It has a tendency, to be sure, to oxidise iron and form rust, and there are a few delicate aniline reds which it changes to purple or blue by its action, but it is unquestionably the most desirable disinfectant known to-day.

Since formaldehyde may be procured in different forms in the market, and since, for complete disinfection, each form must be used in a certain prescribed way, a few words as to its manufacture, its character and its properties would not be out of place. In general, all formaldehyde is made from wood alcohol. When wood (methyl) alcohol is oxidised, formaldehyde gas is given off, and this gas being readily absorbed by water is easily made into the solution, commonly known as formalin. This is the commercial 40 per cent. solution from which the gas is distilled for disinfecting purposes. Methods of distillation are fully described in a later paragraph. The practice of distilling formaldehyde gas by using the wood alcohol lamp, which was popular with health officers a few years ago, is not now held in such high repute. It is not an efficient method of disinfection. The wood alcohol so burned yields formaldehyde gas too slowly, and never in definite amounts, so that a certain quantity of wood alcohol cannot be depended

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