

ordered to overcome long-standing constipation. The fluid should be prepared in a glass douche jug, to which is attached a short tube with stopcock, to which again a long rectal tube is fixed (an œsophageal feeding tube does very well, or a large rubber catheter). The patient lies, comfortably covered up, on the side, with the buttocks raised by a small cushion or folded towel. The rectal tube should be well greased, and the flow started gently while introducing it into the rectum; very slowly and gently it must be pushed on till about twelve inches are in the bowel. If the flow is slow and regular, the douche-can never being held higher than six inches above the patient's buttocks, there will seldom be any difficulty. If the fluid is run in quickly, the intestine will probably contract spasmodically, pain will be felt, and the whole operation will have to be started over again, after a sufficient interval to allow the contractions to quiet down.

In cases where there is no organic obstruction to the passage of the fæces through the bowel, as there is, *e.g.*, in cancer of the rectum, hypnotic suggestion is a most effectual and harmless method of procuring a daily evacuation. The patient will be put into a sufficiently receptive state by the physician, and the suggestion made that a daily action shall take place at any hour previously ascertained to be convenient to the patient. A few sittings may suffice to relieve constipation of many years' standing. The writer knows of one case, where the complaint had lasted for twenty years, the patient was cured entirely by a few properly directed suggestions. There is no danger of a reaction after psycho-therapeutic treatment, as there is from drugs or injections. But all these methods are more or less *curative*. What we really should aim at is *preventive* treatment. Such consists largely of a hygienic life, regular exercise, baths, vegetables and fruit as well as meat to eat, plenty of cold water to drink, and the regular encouragement of a fixed daily habit at the same time.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors are accorded honourable mention:—Miss A. M. Smith, Miss M. M. G. Bielby, Miss E. Martin, Miss E. F. Stokes, Miss Phipps, Miss E. Marshall.

Miss E. F. Stokes mentions the necessity for discovering the cause of the constipation to be treated. Amongst the most common causes she enumerates definite disease, insufficient exercise, constipating and starchy foods, certain drugs.

Miss E. Martin gives as one cause, want of regularity in attending to the calls of nature.

Symptoms of constipation are headache, languor, loss of appetite, sallow complexion. She also points out that constipation in itself may be the symptom of some grave disease.

Flatulence and colic are associated with constipation. In some cases the hard fæcal matter irritates, dilates, and may possibly perforate the bowel. If the retention takes place at the sigmoid flexure it presses on certain nerves, and the pressure gives rise to intense backache and pain in the thighs. Constipation is also a predisposing cause of hæmorrhoids, and very often the main cause of painful menstruation.

Miss Bielby states that constipation in infants is often due to deficiency of fat in the mother's milk. This should be increased by adding to her diet more butter, milk, salad oil, and fat bacon. Honey for the mother is often a sufficient remedy for constipation in the infant. . . . Older children should be given suitable fruit shortly before breakfast, and also be encouraged to drink freely of barley-water and plain cold water an hour before meals.

Adults should drink at least half a pint of hot or cold water half an hour before each meal. In habitual constipation tea and coffee should be given up temporarily. This is a hard saying, but tea is a great offender in this respect owing to the amount of tannin it contains. If it cannot be relinquished entirely it should be limited to one cup a day, and that made from a brand containing the minimum of tannin and infused for not more than six minutes. Miss Bielby adds that she has never known a case of serious constipation in one eating wholemeal instead of white bread, and many are cured by substituting a fine wheatmeal for the white flour used for bread and all other cookery. Coarse oatmeal porridge, green vegetables, including sorrel, tomatoes, watercress, rhubarb, honey, and fresh fruit should be eaten regularly.

Miss Phipps points out that the cause of constipation in most cases is due to some defect in the digestive process, or it may arise in connection with certain diseases, when it is treated with the disease. In old people the cause is frequently a failure of the nerves governing the excretory system, such as sometimes arises in meningitis.

Miss A. M. Smith draws attention to the point that constipated people often have bad circulation, and says that everything should be done to alleviate this, as it helps a very great deal.

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

How should a nurse care for her hands so that they are kept in the best condition for use in the sick room?

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