

The Midwife.

CARE OF THE MOUTH DURING PREGNANCY.*

[ABRIDGED.]

By M. EVANGELINE JORDAN, D.D.S.

(Concluded from page 324.)

ADVISABILITY OF BREAST FEEDING.

One of the ambitions of every woman who becomes a mother should be to nurse her child during the first year of its life. In order to be able to do so she should conserve her health in every possible way during the nine months of pregnancy. She should avoid all excitement and stimulants which are now known to have a deleterious effect not only upon the mother, but also upon the developing child. Plain, wholesome food, with plenty of fresh air and exercise, but not overwork, will greatly aid in the quest of good health.

The most eminent physicians tell us that a baby while nursing is immune to all the childhood diseases which his mother has had. This means that if the mother in her earlier days has suffered from measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough or diphtheria, or any of the diseases so common to childhood, the nursing baby will probably escape contagion if unfortunate enough to be exposed to such diseases.

DANGERS OF BOTTLE FEEDING.

More than twice as many bottle-fed babies die during the first year as nurslings. This is another of the arguments advanced for nursing a child. In using the bottle there is often a period when the baby is ill nourished because it cannot digest the artificial food. If this period is prolonged and there is great malnutrition, the growth of the teeth in the tiny jaw is interfered with and the teeth may be badly shaped, with pitted surfaces. This is called hypoplasia.

From a dental standpoint the most important reason for nursing is that a better shaped mouth results.

If a child is not nursed it is more liable to have adenoids. When nursed, every little cold is noticed, and immediate measures are taken to cure it, while with a bottle-baby the cold may escape notice. Colds necessitate mouth breathing, which soon becomes a habit, and pathological adenoid tissue results from such conditions. This causes the upper arch of the mouth to become high and narrow. When a child constantly sucks away upon the nipple of a bottle or upon a pacifier, or even upon a thumb or finger, the tender upper jaw is pushed up, causing the horseshoe containing the teeth to become narrower than the

lower jaw on one or both sides. This must be corrected later in life at great expense and discomfort to the child, while in babyhood it can easily be prevented.

If the child must use a bottle see that the holes are large enough and that the bottle is removed as soon as empty. It is not necessary for a child to suck something to induce sleep.

Undoubtedly these habits produce malformation of the sinuses of nose and throat, and may be productive of chronic catarrhal conditions.

Another objection to bottle feeding is that many of the foods used are deficient in lime salts and poor teeth result. If the food is too sweet it causes rapid decay of the first teeth as they begin to erupt. I have found the anterior teeth of many condensed milk babies badly broken down at eighteen months, or before all the molars were in place.

ORAL HYGIENE DURING PREGNANCY.

At home the patient should thoroughly brush the teeth before retiring and after breakfast. If she will use the brush *dry*, placing it upon the gums and brushing toward the cutting edge of the teeth, she will get a stimulating effect upon the gums, which will help restore them to health. Remember the ideal gums are hard, and as thin as a knife blade, where they hug the teeth. If two brushes are kept, so that each is used only once a day, better massage of the gums results. After using the brush dry, wet it and apply any good dentifrice. If the gums bleed after all tartar has been removed ask your dentist for an astringent mouth wash. There are many good prescriptions applicable to different conditions.

Where there is much acidity the woman should, after cleansing the teeth at night, rinse the mouth with milk of magnesia.

THE NURSE'S OPPORTUNITY.

The work of oral hygiene has made considerable progress because of the concerted efforts of the dentists. These efforts have resulted in the foundation of great memorials like the Forsyth Institute of Boston, and the Rochester Dental Dispensary.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Forsyth Institute before its opening. It is a memorial erected by the two living Forsyths to their dead brothers. It is a marble palace on the Fenway, and was erected to care for the teeth of the poor children of Boston. Two million dollars have been dedicated to build, equip and maintain this wonderful charity. Since its erection several others have been started along more modest lines. These have all resulted from the individual work of people interested in the building of a stronger and better race.

There is no one who has a greater opportunity for advancing the cause of oral hygiene than the

* Read at the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the American Nurses' Association, New Orleans, U.S.A., 1916.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)