

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

IF IT IS DECIDED UNDER MEDICAL ADVICE THAT AN INFANT SHALL BE WEANED, WHAT SPECIAL POINTS WOULD YOU OBSERVE IN THE CARE OF THE MOTHER AND CHILD?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

PRIZE PAPER.

When it has been decided that an infant shall be weaned, the first consideration is the substitute for the mother's milk. Frequently, especially in country practice, the medical attendant leaves this point to be decided by the mother and trained nurse, and the latter is expected to be competent to advise as to the best method. In the case of a wealthy patient, a wet nurse is usually chosen by the doctor. She should have perfect health, be from twenty to thirty years of age, possess an equable temperament and a good character; the breasts should be well adapted for suckling, the milk plentiful and good, and her own child should be of the same age as the foster child.

The supervision of the wet nurse is usually left to the trained nurse, who should see that the former has suitable food, exercise, abundant fresh air and sleep, and no alcohol. Also that she is kept happy and quite free from worry.

If bottle-feeding is decided upon, there are several equally good foods. These include humanised milk, sterilized milk and barley water, half-cream dried milk, cows' milk and Benger's Food, and Allen & Hanburys' infant foods. Much depends upon the age of the infant, its constitution, and the parents' circumstances. If the burden of preparing the food is to fall on the overworked mother of a tiny household, the simplest method is the best and cheapest. I have seen excellent results in such cases when Glaxo is used. For cottage homes dried milk is the most suitable.

If sterilized milk be decided upon, the number of feeds required for a twenty-four hours' supply should be mixed and sterilized at one time in separate bottles, and each bottle opened as required.

Punctuality and cleanliness are the first essentials. Modern authorities are agreed as to the advantages of a three-hourly feed. A boat-shaped bottle should be used, with Ingram's "Agrippa" band teat and valve, as these can be sterilized by boiling, and cannot be pulled off the bottle by the child.

Milk for infants should not be boiled, as this destroys the spores, rendering the milk less

digestible and nutritious. Some authorities recommend a daily teaspoonful of the juice of a sweet orange for bottle-fed infants. It should be remembered that a baby is often thirsty, and requires a teaspoonful of cold boiled water between meals.

A baby's mouth must be cleaned with boracic lotion before and after each feed, otherwise stomatitis, thrush, or diarrhoea may occur. Bottles must be kept scrupulously clean. They should not be cleaned with soda, as this corrodes the glass. Used tea leaves are the best cleaning agent. All articles required in preparing the baby's food should be kept on a tray, and covered.

In bottle-feeding, the food must be given slowly, not less than fifteen minutes being spent over each feed, the baby afterwards being laid in its cot.

Humanised milk can be obtained from the large dairy companies in sealed bottles. It can, however, be prepared at home, remembering that the proportion of its constituents must vary as human milk does according to the age of the child. A good formula for this is: One quart of new milk. Let it stand for seven hours. Ten ounces of the top milk are then to be taken off. Take 18 oz. of the remainder, and make whey by heating it to 105° F. in a double saucepan. Stir in one teaspoonful of good rennet. Then break up the curd, and heat the whey to 155° F. Remove the saucepan; let it stand for five minutes, then strain off the whey. Dissolve 1 oz. of sugar of milk in boiling water, add 1½ oz. of lime water, and put into the 10 oz. of top milk. Then add 12 oz. of whey.

If there is any tendency to constipation, pure cane Demerara sugar may be substituted for sugar of milk, or an occasional teaspoonful of barley water may be given.

The mother's breasts may become engorged and painful. Authorities differ as to the best mode of relieving the condition, some advising massage with oil, hot fomentations, and the use of the breast pump. Others insist that the line of masterly inactivity should be followed, and that a dry bandage to relieve the weight of the breasts is the only thing needful, the secretion of milk ceasing when stimulation is stopped.

In either case, all liquids should be reduced to a minimum, and a saline purgative be given daily. If the breasts are to be compressed a figure of 8 bandage over cotton-wool is the most comfortable, powdering the under side to prevent soreness. When there is much pain, the doctor may prescribe codeine. The breasts should be watched regarding the possibility of an abscess forming.

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