

The Midwife.

FEEDING BABY THE SENSIBLE WAY

IT is astounding the number of young mothers who honestly believe they can feed a baby without ever going to the trouble of finding out how.

These devoted young people go to any amount of trouble to get the right angle on cooking for the husband, supposedly with the hope of getting a little praise for their efforts, but poor baby has to "catch as catch can," and suffers accordingly.

The instruction, vital instruction, can certainly be obtained from doctors, nurses and clinics, etc., where specialists are only too pleased to help, but these people are so busy that they cannot spend much time on each case. There are so very many demands on their services.

In recent years we have passed through a phase when artificial feeding was resorted to oftener than was good for the baby, but thank goodness breast feeding is again on the increase. The natural result is that the incidence of infant mortality in the early days of life is decreasing, and this fact is so significant, and vitally important to the health of the baby and its mother, that doctors, midwives and specialist infant nurses endeavour to instil on the mother the need to breast feed her baby as long as necessary. This natural food given during the early days ensures a good start in life and providing the mother's health is up to standard, the difficulties and snags of feeding with artificials are dispensed with. Both mother and baby benefit.

Few mothers realise that breast feeding is a necessary natural function which helps the womb to recover from its long period of child development before birth. It is one of Nature's safeguards for the mother, and it doesn't take much imagination to understand that this process of a natural function must, by virtue of Natural law, be the right one.

Nature, by reason of its fecundity, intends mothers to have more than one baby, and therefore, the productive organs and their capacity must be maintained. Breast feeding is one of her ways of keeping the mother fit and well for future occasions.

One of the greatest benefits that the baby derives from its mother's milk, is that it resists infection better than the artificially-fed child, consequently the baby is a healthier one in all respects. This resistance to infection means that there are fewer setbacks to its development and its progress is unimpaired.

An advantage to the mother, on material considerations, is that breast feeding is cheaper. There is less irritating preparation of special foods and of course no sterilising precautions are necessary.

Experience has proved that the inability of the baby to take natural milk is more often due to a fault in the feeding than to the milk itself, but this can be overcome very easily.

Young mothers who are out at work, and, rather strange to relate, others who find the pull of enjoyment stronger than the call of their child's welfare, find that breast feeding takes up a certain amount of their time and becomes, shall it be said, inconvenient.

Whatever reasons are put forward, however, it is a wise mother who always remembers that the baby did not ask to be born, and therefore has no say in the matter at all. But since he exists the mother must decide which shall come first, work, pleasure, or her baby's welfare. There is no need to point out which is the most important.

The most common complaint received from young mothers is that the baby doesn't seem to be doing as well as it should. Being such a prevalent and common complaint there is usually not much cause for alarm.

As the young child is normally a healthy little body, feeding is more often than not the cause of the trouble. If breast-fed, it is more than likely that the baby is being starved, in other words, underfed, and this is where the mother should look unto herself.

Under present conditions, young mothers have, by necessity, to do a certain amount of work, and so what does this mean? It means that a lot of physical energy is used on the work, whether housework or otherwise, and the baby's unthriving condition is an added worry. Perhaps worry is the greatest evil of all to a mother suckling her own child. The result is the drying up of the milk supply and starvation for the baby.

This is where commonsense steps in.

It is usual that for the first early-morning feed there is an ample supply of milk, but later supplies are scanty.

This indicates that a body fatigued by work cannot supply enough energy for work and for milk production, so as work has to be done, the milk dries up. The remedy, such a simple one, is to rest an hour before each feed during the day, allowing the energy to be directed towards milk production instead of towards supplying physical energy for work. Remember that such simple things as walking, getting meals and such like, spell work. Rest completely for at least an hour before each feed.

Milk is largely made up of water, consequently, a shortage of this element in the mother's body may mean that whilst all the ingredients for producing good, rich, satisfying milk are present in the mammary glands, there is a shortage of water to liquify it, so drink more water. A glass taken about half to three-quarters of an hour before feeding time will often work wonders.

Young mothers do not drink enough water as a rule.

A domestic dairy cow giving large quantities of milk needs great quantities of water, or the milk yield drops, so it is easily understood that the human female body needs lots of liquid if she is to produce adequate quantities of this vital fluid.

Nature makes provision for all things, so when a baby cries it means something. It cannot talk, of course, by using words, but the different tone of his cries usually gives an indication of what is the trouble.

Distress through the accumulation of gas in the stomach, usually called "wind," is detected by the thin, high-pitched type of cry, a pain-suggesting cry; but when the infant is hungry or bad tempered what a difference. The cry is a lusty, full-bodied one, full of determination and will only be silenced by a good feed. Delay the feed of a baby for half an hour and the cry for food is unmistakable.

If wind is present, this should be attended to before lying the baby down to sleep. If this is not done, regurgitation of the food is usually the result, with distress to the child and soiled clothes for the mother to look after, also the value of the food is lost.

Never allow the baby to fall asleep whilst he is feeding. It is a lazy habit, and should not be tolerated. Fifteen minutes on each breast is usually enough, but it is the first five minutes on each side which provides the most food.

It is often found that towards evening, tiredness will prevent any interest in feeding, so no harm will result if occasionally a feed is missed at night. He will be all the more ready for the next meal and he is gaining strength and weight whilst sleeping.

Be regular in feeding, but not dogmatic. A little wise elasticity in timing is often beneficial. Young mothers must remember that a baby is not a machine, but a flesh and blood human being.

A last word concerns the mother herself and her food. She can eat anything if she is healthy, but it is always wise to avoid acid things such as pickles, vinegar, very acid fruits like the stone fruits, etc., and she should never take medicine unless the doctor or qualified nurse instructs her to do so.

If the foregoing brief remarks are observed by every young healthy mother, her baby should grow up healthy and strong and be a credit to her commonsense in the way she fed it during its first few weeks on earth.

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