

"Worms in Young Children."

By A. E. Hopkins.

QUITE A NUMBER OF CHILDREN suffer from worm infestation for a considerable period before their presence is suspected.

Again, many mothers suspect the reason for the lack of progress made by their children, but do very little about it.

However, the presence of these parasitic bodies inside children is a very great handicap to them and is nearly always the cause of them being what is commonly known as "bad doers."

These parasites live inside the digestive tract. There are several kinds known to medical science, but in this country only two are generally encountered. These are the long round-worm and the short threadworm.

The long round type has an anaemic earth-worm appearance; is from six to ten inches in length and is found in the upper part of the intestine. One or two are usually all that are present at one time, but records show that larger numbers have been found on occasion.

The thread worm is the more common in human beings and a child known to be infected is said to be suffering from "worms." Each of these parasites is less than half an inch in length, pointed at each end and looks like a thin piece of string. They infect the lower sections of the larger intestine including the rectum and create a considerable amount of very unpleasant irritation.

This little worm multiplies rapidly in the intestine and large numbers can be found in the rectal section.

The symptoms of a worm sufferer are unmistakable. The round worm causes the more serious condition, but as the thread type is far more prevalent, it is with this that we are immediately concerned.

Irritability, fretfulness and nervousness are three of the lack of condition symptoms, whilst others include abdominal pains and discomfort, diarrhoea and vomiting. Serious cases produce bed wetting and convulsions. Usually a sufferer's mother or the nurse at the clinic will discover the reason for the child's condition before the serious stages are reached, but it is wise to know the serious results possible if the condition is neglected.

If a child eats well and despite good nourishing food fails to make progress with practically no gain in weight, it is quite reasonable to suspect that worms are the cause. If fretfulness and irritability for no apparent reason are also present, the suspicion is almost certain to be right.

Other signs that worms are present are, picking of the nose, grating the teeth and scratching at the bowel end, known as the anus.

If any combination of the foregoing are present the next stage is to prove that the suspicions are correct.

A visual test is necessary and an enema is indicated. Inject about a quart of warm water, to which a small level tablespoonful of common salt has been added, into the rectum, and carefully examine the returns.

If thread worms are present they will be evacuated with the motions, but as the enema solution will not reach the upper intestine, the round worm cannot be detected in this way.

The doctor can prescribe drugs that will certainly kill the parasites in the little child's body, but usually a medical man or nurse is rather reluctant to use strong drugs on a young child.

Fortunately there are other methods and these should be applied whenever possible.

The worst feature of drugging is that rather powerful vermifuges have to be used, and together with the necessary purgative which has to follow to clear the tract, causes a rather severe strain on the delicate organs of the child. A further point is that whilst the drugs will certainly eradicate the worms, they do not remove the cause, and it is quite possible that the infestation will re-occur.

It is by no means certain as to where the worms originate. It is obvious, however, that they enter by the mouth, mostly in egg form, and finding a suitable medium in the mucous and faeces in the bowels for germination, develop in this way. This being so, it is reasonable to assume that if the digestion tract and eliminating processes are kept healthy and on the move, the eggs will simply pass through the body without hatching.

If mucous and constipation are present, it is more than likely that worms will develop so this condition must not be allowed to arise.

Modern medical science looks upon an infestation of worms as an illness and is treated accordingly.

A nurse or mother, as soon as she knows that the child is infected, should give it a warm salt water enema and then put it to bed for a day, for the child is definitely ill and must be efficiently care for and treated.

Whilst the child is in bed, no food of any sort should be allowed, but plenty of lemon, orange or pineapple juice diluted with clean water can be taken. The following day and for as long as a week, if the symptoms indicate, only fresh ripe raw fruit should be given at three regular intervals during the day time.

No sweet fruits such as dates, figs, bananas or dried fruits should be allowed, and milk, bread, cakes and sweets should be withheld from the diet for a time. Concentrate on diluted fresh ripe raw fruits as mentioned only and nothing else whatsoever.

Just before going to sleep each night, a wineglassful of raw carrot juice is a good thing. To prepare this, thoroughly scrub a large clean carrot, scald it in boiling water and then grate it on to a china plate. Fold the pulp into a piece of boiled muslin and ring out the juice into a china or glass receptacle.

A large carrot will produce a teacupful of rich clear juice. Each evening the child should have an enema to wash out the worms and eggs. This is a simple procedure which any nurse or capable mother can perform with ease. It has no injurious effects on the child.

After twenty-four hours in bed, the child can get up and at the end of a week on the above regime, the enemas can cease and food of a more solid nature can be introduced.

By this time the worms should have been completely eradicated and the nurse's efforts should now be directed towards building up the child's strength again.

Good food with plenty of fresh fruit, wholemeal bread and dairy produce can be added to the diet, but the carrot juice at night time should be continued for a time.

Plenty of outdoor games with moderate sun and air baths, with a daily warm bath followed by a brisk rub down, will tone up the system and induce healthy quiet sleep.

The bowels should be emptied night and morning to prevent stagnation and possible re-absorption of toxic matter. This is purely a matter of simple education.

Every care should be taken to prevent infection by doubtful water supplies. Vegetables, greens saladings, especially watercress, should be scrupulously washed.

If the child's health is built up by these methods, Nature will provide its own defence against further infection, and never again will the child be classified as a "bad doer" through worm infestation.

TRUE TALE.

Among a group of our children taken to Hazard to see Dr. Cooley Combs, the oculist who is so deeply kind as to give his consultations free, was a five-year-old girl who had never been outside her own home territory before. While she sat in the examining room, she heard Dr. Combs' secretary typing in the reception room. After listening a few moments, she turned to the nurse with this remark, "Them rats sure are chewing up that paper, ain't they?"

M.A.Q.

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