

## **HEALTH PROBLEMS OF THE SCHOOL AGE CHILD\***

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A new epoch in a child's life opens with the first day at school. An adjustment must be made, physiologically and emotionally, to a new set of circumstances. Flexibility is expected of the young, although some constitutions and temperaments adjust more readily than others.

Fortunately, most young children continue to live at home while attending school. This is important, as a totally new environment might cause a feeling of an anxiety and insecurity.

School hours for the lower grades vary in different localities. In some rural districts they are too long from a health stand-point. Children need plenty of play time out of doors and no amount of air conditioning, inside illumination or gymnasium exercises can take its place.

Recess periods should be intelligently and carefully supervised and healthful activities encouraged. Delicate and timid children must be protected from ridicule and injury at the hands of those of the bullying type. Any pronounced tendency to form cliques or gangs should be discouraged by proper direction and diversion of interest and not by suppressive measures. Recreational facilities and sports have much to do with the problem of emotional adjustment.

The school age child needs sympathetic guidance and understanding. Threats to children are of no avail. Parents and teachers should see to it that their word can always be depended upon. Treat the child as though he were the reasonable human

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being which he really is. Let him feel the dignity of cooperation and never the degradation of compulsion.

A major health hazard for young children is the varying programmes for immunization which to a greater or less degree are compulsory in many parts of the country. Formerly, vaccination against smallpox was the one and only immunizing risk and that was incurred any time prior to entering school. Now, infants and children of pre-school age are subjected to an ever-increasing number and variety of "shots," vaccinations and inoculations. If this trend continues, the term "human pin-cushion" will be come ever more painfully true. Where there is no legal requirement the force of advertising propaganda amounts to practically the same thing.

Reactions to these inoculations and immunizations range all the way from nothing observable to death itself. Meanwhile all that is required of the public is faith and cooperation.

When the sale of anti-histamine tablets "went right up to tens of millions of dollars" (TIME, Apr. 3, 50, page 78) on prophylactic and therapeutic grounds so utterly flimsy and chimerical, no one but a moron would be qualified to trust the advertised word of the interested parties on any health matter whatsoever.

When a child has never been well since vaccination or inoculation homoeopathic treatment offers the best hope of restoring health. Consult the rubric Vaccination in the Generalities section of the Repertory. Often the remedy will be found outside of this rather narrow list. All of the nosodes should be considered as well as the serpent poisons and the leading polychrests. *Arsenicum*, *Kali phos.*, *Lachesis*, *Phosphorus*, *Silicea* and *Sulphur* and *Thuja* are especially related to chronic effects following artificial immunization.

Next comes the problem of colds and the various infectious diseases. Epidemics of one kind or another often run through a

school or community. Sometimes an entire section of the country is affected. The majority of infections of an epidemic nature occur during the cooler months of the year, especially those affecting the respiratory tract. Thus colds and the exanthemata, which often begin with symptoms resembling a cold, are most prevalent during the school term.

The greater the difference between in-door and out-door temperature, the worse are conditions apt to be for the respiratory tract. Adequate humidity in the home, the school and all public buildings should be a matter of prime consideration in all new construction. Unless means are provided for automatically adding sufficient moisture to the air during the heating season, the low in-door humidity will have a drying and irritating effect upon mucous membranes and will predispose to inflammatory conditions of the respiratory tract. The skin will also become irritated in such an atmosphere and its function impaired.

Sudden chilling, especially when over-heated as after active exercise, is frequently the immediate cause of a severe cold, bronchitis or pneumonia. Children must be repeatedly cautioned and protected in so far as possible against such chilling.

In the event of any acute illness the child must be kept home and cared for along conservative lines :

- Confine to bed if there is much fever.
- Warm or hot sponge baths.
- Diet of raw fruit and freshly squeezed juice.
- Water ad lib. but do not force.
- Avoid chilling to prevent complications.
- No medication unless prescribed by physician.
- No laxatives of any kind.
- Small, plain water enemas but only in necessary.
- Avoid to sudden return to usual routine.

To shorten illness, avoid complications and prevent sequellae the homoeopathic remedy excels every other form of therapy. All other medication is more or less suppressive and often toxic in its effect. There is no necessity or excuse for a homoeopathic physician to employ chemotherapy, antibiotics or any other kind of routine medication.

The problem of nutrition is a major one and frequently a difficult one to control. Food is directly related to health, always has been and always will be and habits of eating begin to form at an early age, either in the direction of health or away from it.

As long as the child lives at home while attending school two meals a day at least are under parental supervision. To assume that the average parent knows less about human nutrition than the average school nurse or dietician (we are going to leave the school doctor out of this) is to accuse such a parent of colossal ignorance.

Healthful and hygienic habits of eating are as easily encouraged and cultivated in young children as are the unhealthful ones. However, at school the pull of the majority is often too strong and in the wrong direction. Any kind of junk that can be sold at a profit is munched and guzzled in ever increasing quantities everywhere. In the amplitude of time these insidious poisons will exact their toll. All of the degenerative diseases are advancing at an alarming rate. It must be the sum total, the over-all pattern of living, that is bringing about so disastrous a trend.

A very simple health rule for everyone, young or old, is the following: *Take nothing between meals or at bedtime except raw fruits or freshly squeezed juice.* Much of health for years to come is contained in this simple formula. Only on very special and we hope infrequent occasions should this rule be disregarded.

Meals for school children should always include liberal servings of raw fruits and raw vegetable salads. These are the number one health food and they should be served at the beginning rather than at the end of the meal if necessary to insure their consumption. A wide variety of such foods is most important and the less dressings used the better. The best dressing of all is nothing whatsoever. One can become accustomed to the good taste of natural, wholesome food. If, however, difficulty is experienced in getting children to eat raw vegetable salads a sweet cream and honey dressing plus a few unsulphured raisins will help to put it over in a big way. Lemon juice and olive oil will also make a pleasing and tasteful dressing.

Emphasis should always be placed upon the fresh foods, avoiding canned fruits and vegetables, canned soups, fish and meats, canned and bottled juices. Canned goods of all kinds should be placed on the reserved list for emergency use only.

Frozen foods should be used with caution. Better techniques will no doubt improve their value in time but the risk of careless handling is considerable. A grocer received an order of frozen fish. The entire lot was a total loss. The shipment had stood all night on the warehouse platform, was partly thawed out and then refrozen.

The use of laxatives of all kinds should be strictly avoided. A sure way to build chronic constipation in the growing child is to give an occasional laxative on the theory that will help to keep the intestinal tract properly cleansed. It will have no such effect. It will only pervert the digestive secretions and interfere with gastro-intestinal function and efficiency.

Give proper attention to the problem of nutrition and the most important step toward intestinal normalcy will have been taken. It is also essential that the child be taught regularity of habit and always to respond as promptly as possible to the natural urge for stool. Neglect along these lines will predispose to chronic intestinal stasis.

Probably the least harmful aid in case of stubborn constipation is a small, plain warm water enema, less than half a pint for a young child, older children not more than a pint. Larger amounts of water will distend the bowel and are therefore detrimental. The habitual use of enemas should be condemned. Occasionally in acute illness they may be used in very toxic cases but if the intake of food is sufficiently restricted and of a non-toxic nature the danger from constipation is negligible.

The problem of dental care is an important one. There are two major causes of either good or poor teeth. One depends upon what has actually been built into the constipation prior to birth and the other is the adequacy and quality of the nutrients provided thereafter. Here again the more raw foods in the diet the better and the less sweets and processed foods the better. Sugar, either as such or in the form of candy, pastry or bottled beverages will induce dental caries through acid fermentation in the mouth. Excessive use of sugar containing foods may even rob the teeth and bones of calcium through the production of calcium succrate which is excreted by the kidneys.

The tooth brush should be the softest available in the market and that will be none too soft. Moreover, in brushing the teeth one should not confuse this task with that of scrubbing off the front porch. The probabilities are that the tooth brush has ruined more teeth than it has ever saved. Thorough rinsing of the mouth with plain water immediately after taking anything sweet is important in preventing tooth decay.

The use of a dentifrice in cleaning the teeth is relatively unimportant, except that some of them are more or less of a menace either locally or constitutionally. E.B. Nash referred to "Satan's sly emissaries, tooth pastes and mouth washes."

Lack of sufficient sleep is the cause of much nervous tension in the school age child. Many of the gadgets of modern civilization have done much toward turning night into day and to rob children of much needed rest and now we have television to

further aggravate the situation. It is up to the parents, under medical advice if necessary, to insist upon adequate time for study and more important still a sufficient number of hours for rest and sleep. Sleep is just as important as food in the normal development of the growing child. The lack of it may cause either temporary or permanent derangement of the endocrine system to the detriment of health and happiness and to one's success in life.

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[*Courtesy ; The Homoeopathic Recorder, August, 1950*]



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