

SCROFULA.

The term scrofula comes from the word scrofa, which signifies a sow, because swine were supposed to be especially subject to swellings in the neck. This term is used to designate a peculiar primary, constitutional disease, which may result either in the formation of tubercles or in some specific form of inflammation or ulceration. The peculiar condition of the system that lies at the foundation of these varieties of this wide spread disease is called the scrofulous, strumous, or tuberculous diathesis. This term simply signifies a frail, delicate, infirm, lax organization with weak depurating organs. In the early stages of this disease, tubercles are developed.

The word tubercle signifies a knot, or excrescence. A tubercle is a small tumor or morbid growth in the substance of an organ. It differs from the tissues, yet it has



some vitality. It is somewhat of the nature of the wart. At first, the tubercle is a gray, tough, compressible, semi-transparent substance, resembling in appearance the millet seed.

For a time, tubercles have a low vitality, but after a while, they die and are decomposed into a yellow, cheesy mass. These tubercles have been found in various organs. The following is the order of frequency in which various organs were found affected, by Willigk, who examined 1317 cases of tuberculous diseases.

The lungs were the most frequently affected, next, the intestines, mesenteric glands, larynx, lymphatic glands, peritoneum, spleen, kidneys, pleura, liver, air passages, bones, genital organs, brain, membranes of the brain, urinary passages, heart case, stomach, bowels, skin, muscles, tongue, pharynx, pancreas, and heart. It will be seen that every organ is liable to be the seat of tubercles. When these tubercles break down, they usually form abscesses or ulcers. Sometimes the decomposed tubercles are gathered up by the lymphatic vessels and carried to the lymphatic glands (generally of the neck, or those under the arms, or in the groins), where they are lodged. These glands soon became inflamed and an abscess forms which soon becomes a foul, running ulcer, and is very hard to heal.

If the tubercles form in the **lungs**, the disease is called tubercular consumption. In this case, abscesses form in the lungs. If the tubercles form in the mesentery—the **fatty membrane** that binds the **intestines** together— abscesses form, and mesenteric consumption, or consumption of the bowels, is the result.

Tubercles of the **skin** are usually formed in the face. There is to be seen an innumerable number of small, red eminences, which are hard and of a bright color. These occasionally become disorganized, and discharge pus until the tubercle is all removed, after which the sore heals.

The scrofulous diathesis is very easily recognized. The child has a pale and pasty complexion, large head, narrow chest, protuberant belly, weak and flabby muscles, and is apt to have sore eyelids, or sore ears, or sores about its face and neck. Scrofula may develop at any period of life in those who are liable to it. The special causes most frequently assigned for its appearance are hereditary influences, impure air, improper food, cold, damp atmosphere, and syphilitic affections.

By hereditary influences is meant that the child has inherited a weak constitution—weak vital organs — from his parents.

Treatment.— It is evident that all those causes which induce this disease must be sedulously avoided. The patient should have an abundance of pure, fresh air and clear sunlight. He should have an abundant supply of nutritious food, which should consist principally of fruits, grains, and vegetables. Greasy and oily food is particularly bad in this disease, and should be avoided. Milk, if pure, is not objectionable when cooked with other food. The patient should exercise daily in the open air according to his strength. He should **bathe** two or three times a week. The form of bath is immaterial. It may be the tepid full-bath for ten minutes, or the half-bath, or dripping-sheet, or any of these alternated with the wet-sheet-pack. If there is fever, the cool full bath or pack may be taken once or twice daily as long as the fever lasts. The bowels must be kept free by the use of proper food or with enemas. The patient should take a sun-bath daily. Cold wet compresses should be constantly applied to the tumors so long as they manifest heat, redness, or pain. Nothing but the strictest observance of the laws of health will enable a person to overcome this disease. Read Part I, and obey its teachings, also see Constitutional Treatment, and bathe as there directed.

The Hygienic Family Physician: A Complete Guide for the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick without Medicine, pg. 244-247 by M. G. Kellogg