

DIARRHEA.

Medical writers give us seven varieties of this disease; but as such a division will only tend to confuse the mind of the nurse, the disease will be described as a unit.

Cause.— Overeating, and the use of improper food, such as unripe fruit, raw vegetables, sausage, pork, veal, or excessive quantities of fresh meat of any kind. Salt meat and salt fish may cause diarrhea by first inducing constipation. It may also be caused by want of nourishing food, by drinking foul water, or by inhaling the fumes of decaying animal or vegetable matter, or by great mental excitement, exposure to damp or cold, or by excessive heat. Diarrhea is often a symptom of pulmonary consumption, congestion of the liver, and nervous and putrid— typhoid— fever.

Symptoms.— The faecal discharges may be of the common quality, yet be loose and copious; if so, the cause is overeating or irritating food. In addition to the former symptoms, the faeces may contain much bilious matter, in which case the discharges would be yellow or greenish. There may be much mucus mixed with the faeces, or they may be very watery, the discharges being thin and frothy, or the food may be

expelled undigested. There may be membranous matter discharged; if so, there is much inflammation in the bowels. There is also griping pain in the abdomen.

Treatment.— This must depend upon the cause. If occasioned by overeating, fasting would be requisite; if by liver difficulty, the liver should be treated (see Diseased Liver); if by inflammation of the bowels, treat the inflammation. When the treatment is commenced, a very thorough tepid enema should be administered. It should be as large as the patient can bear, and should consist of from a quart to two quarts of water for an adult, and in proportion for a child. The enema should be repeated the second day. Small cold enemas— about a tumblerful— should be administered once or twice a day and retained. Warm sitz-baths, followed by a cool sitz-bath, should be taken for fifteen or twenty minutes, three or four times a week. The hot fomentation, alternating with the cold compress, once or twice a week, is useful. The general health must be attended to (see Dyspepsia). The food must be largely or wholly composed of preparations of fruits and grains. Wheat meal, oatmeal, barley meal, and cracked wheat, may all be used.