

HEALTH HINTS—*continued.*

DIPHTHERIA

Diphtheria is a very catching disease. It commonly attacks young children, but older persons also sometimes suffer from it.

The infection of Diphtheria may be caught from a person ill of it; from any article, such as a spoon, pencil, toy, whistle, etc., which has been in the patient's mouth; from clothing, bedding, linen, books, and any other articles soiled by discharges from the nose or mouth; from infected milk; and from "carriers," i.e., apparently healthy individuals who harbour the germs of Diphtheria in their throats or noses. Drains are not responsible for the spread of Diphtheria.

After a person has been exposed to the infection of Diphtheria, from one to five days may elapse before the disease shows itself. Under exceptional circumstances even a longer time may elapse.

At first the patient is usually dull and listless, is pale, has some soreness of the throat, bad-smelling breath, and slight fever; but sometimes the first signs are breathlessness and choking. Sometimes, again, scarcely anything is noticeable at first, except a painful swelling of the glands under the jaw, which may be mistaken for mumps. Whenever these signs are present the sick person should be immediately separated from the rest of the household and the advice of a medical practitioner should be obtained as soon as possible.

If the disease be Diphtheria, it is most advisable for the safety of other members of the family that the patient should be promptly isolated either at home or preferably by transferring to a hospital. In view of the special liability to obstruction of the breathing passages in young children affected with Diphtheria, it is most important that the patient should be cared for where skilled aid is constantly at hand—for preference in a hospital.

Treatment, to be effective, must be given promptly. Even slight delay may be dangerous. Where adequate doses of anti-toxin are given on the first day on which the disease appears, the death rate is generally very low, but every hour's delay thereafter in commencing treatment increases the danger of a fatal result. This is a fact which should be known to every parent.

How to Prevent the Spread of Infection

Avoid persons with sore throats.

Do not let a child go near a case of Diphtheria, nor receive anything from a house, nor associate with persons belonging to a house, in which there is a case of Diphtheria.

Whenever any infectious disease is prevalent, the children should not be allowed to play where they are likely to join with little-known or strange children.

Do not move into a house without inquiring as to Diphtheria. Every person negotiating for the hire of a house or part of a house is by law entitled to be truthfully informed by the person letting it as to the existence of Diphtheria (as well as of other infectious diseases in the house) within the previous six weeks.

A school pupil suffering from Diphtheria is to be excluded from school for at least three weeks from the date of onset of the disease and for an additional four weeks unless a certificate is furnished by a medical practitioner that the patient is free from infection. School children who are "contacts" of a case of Diphtheria are excluded from school until ten days after exposure in any infected premises; if the patient is removed to hospital, then until ten days after such removal and subsequent disinfection of the premises. If, however, the patient is treated at home, the "contacts" are to be excluded from attendance until the patient is entitled to return to school.

Preventive Inoculation

DIPHTHERIA CAN BE PREVENTED. Not every person is liable to take the disease, but the majority of young children are, especially those under school age. Some protection develops as age advances, but even among adults, a proportion remain liable unless suitably treated. Children between one and five years of age are the most likely to suffer from Diphtheria. All children over the age of twelve months should be protected, including those of school age.

The method of protecting against Diphtheria which is recommended by the Health Department consists of giving three small injections of anatoxin at intervals of three weeks. More than ninety per cent. of those receiving the injections become protected against the disease after a period varying from a few weeks to six months. Once a child is thus protected against Diphtheria, it will remain so for many years—probably for life.

It is usual to make a preliminary test for sensitiveness, and to modify the dose of anatoxin according to the requirements of each individual child.



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