

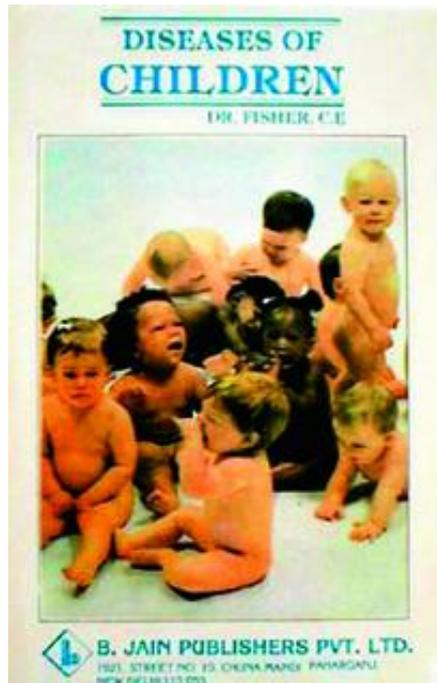
C.E. Fisher Diseases of Children

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[Diseases of Children](#)

of [C.E. Fisher](#)

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CHAPTER III.

INFANT HYGIENE

Oil Baths—Water Baths—The Toilet—Binder—Air and Exercise—Care of the Eyes.

Oil baths.—It has been the custom from time immemorial give the newly born infant a warm bath immediately upon its arrival into the world, but it is now understood that this is a common cause of broncho-pneumonia among children, and early death from congestion of the internal organs, excited by the removal the protective oil of the skin and the taking of cold while child is being bathed, and the wiser process of allowing the first bath to be an oil inunction has been established. Instead of giving

the child a water bath it should be thoroughly anointed with warm olive oil immediately upon being separated from the placenta. By the free application of oil, applied by the hand and followed by gentle wiping with soft flannel cloths, the infant can be more thoroughly and easily cleansed than by the water bath. The anointing should be thorough, especially in the arm pits, groins, and folds of the skin about the genitals, and over the scalp, and about the ears and neck. The eyes should be carefully wiped with lint, and the mouth and nostrils may be cleansed in like manner if necessary; but the practice of giving the newly born babe a water bath is discountenanced. In order to guard against the development of an irritating rash the oil should be sweet and pure olive oil, and the drying of the child should be gently but thoroughly done. For purposes of cleanliness local bathing about the genitals and perineum should be practiced after each urination and stool; but it is not necessary to give the baby a general water bath for two or three days after its birth. Oil baths may be repeated every morning if necessary up to this time, and even after bathing is commenced it is better to thoroughly anoint the infant after its bath.

Water baths.—After the second or third day the general warm bath may be given every other morning or every third or fourth morning. The routine practice of the daily bath of the new born infant is not justifiable by reason nor defensible from the standpoint of necessity. There is nothing uncleanly about the little fellow, and if reasonable care be taken to protect him from unnecessary soiling by urination and defecation it is not essential that he should be submitted during the first few weeks of his life to the handling and exposure and churning necessary to the proper performance of the bath. As the infant grows older and stronger he will enjoy his morning ablution. It is usually one of the greatest pleasures of child life to splash and play in the water every morning; but even here intelligence should be exercised on the part of the parent or physician, and should the child object to the bath it need only be given for purposes of cleanliness. Many children are tortured day in and day out, week in and week out, by unnecessary bathing, against which they rebel with all their might. In special instances this aversion is constitutional and should be respected. When it is so pronounced that necessary bathing can only be accomplished under difficulty, because of the vigorous objections of the infant to the application of water to the skin, an occasional dose of *Sulphur*, in high attenuation, will usually overcome the antipathy, and bathing will become less of an objection, if not altogether a pleasure. Routinism is no more justifiable in infant bathing than in any other practice.

When bathing is practiced it should be done at a regular time and in the morning, usually about the middle of the forenoon.

At first the tub should contain but enough water to make bath of the infant by hand or soft cloth easy, but as the child is able to sit up in the tub and enjoy his bath it should CONTAIN enough water to come well up to his waist or chest. The practice of bathing a child's head first, before immersing his body, is a good one. It is not necessary to use a great deal of soap, and, in if the bathing is carefully done or the child's skin shows unusual tenderness or susceptibility to the action of chemicals it will not be wise to resort to it at all. Harsh soap is a frequent cause of chapped skin, roughness, tetter, and other skin diseases. The best soap for infant use is unscented castile, and it should be remembered the delicacy of baby organism renders the use of highly see soaps objectionable. The child's bath should be warm, about 95° F. Bathing in connection with certain diseases of childhood very helpful adjuvant, and will be discussed in connection individual ailments.

The Toilet.—The successful dressing of infants is an The simpler the dress the better. There is no more certain torture for a young child than to dress it to excess. The first article of clothing is the diaper. As a rule this is several times too large and cumbersome, and is one of the causes of genital eczema also of bow-legs. It is not necessary to have four or five thicknesses of bird's-eye wedged between the infant's legs, covering its thighs and buttocks. The quantity of urine voided at urination is not more than an ounce. It is sufficient to have more than a single thickness of diaper, with a fold of lint, old linen, thoroughly clean, or absorbent cotton, folded about the nates and genitals to receive the urine and excrement. This in removed as often as soiled, destroyed or thrown into the fire. Thus a great deal of unpleasant laundrying will be avoided. Just; sanitary napkins are now being used during menstruation so similar devices be resorted to in the care of the newly born infant.

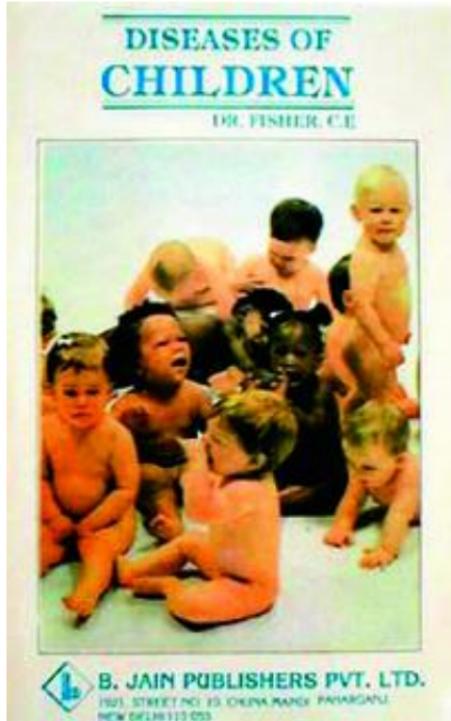
The outer garments should be very simple. That to be worn next the skin should consist of exceedingly soft baby flannel made in a single piece of sufficient length to extend to about a foot below the feet, with sleeves to the wrists; the hem; seams may be turned on the outside, so that nothing rough irritating will be next the child's skin. The second garment be made the same shape as the first and without sleeves. It inch or so larger than the first, so that it will fit outside of it, and the armholes and neckband may be scalloped so as to be comfortable to the child. If it be desirable to have the first garment of material than flannel, because flannel renders the child uncomfortable, the second garment may be of flannel, that the infant be kept warm and comfortable. The outer garment or dress is to be made of any material desired; it may be made as dressy mother may wish, but should be exceedingly plain.

When dressing time comes these three garments may be put together, body within body, sleeve within sleeve, this being the Gertrude dress of Prof. L., C. Grosvenor, of Chicago, and by all means the simplest and most sensible baby dress yet devised. By being thus put together the garments may be slipped over the head as if but one, and a great deal of unnecessary handling and turning of the infant is avoided. Draw-strings and buttons are put at the back of each garment, and thus toilet pins are unnecessary. The back is open downward five or six inches, and one button is located about the middle of each open space. The night gown is made of the same soft material as the under garment of the suit.

The Gertrude suit consists of the three garments, made just as simple and plain as can be, the outer one alone being dressy, the simple night gown just mentioned, and two diapers. The outer diaper consists of canton flannel and is eighteen inches square, the inner and smaller is ten inches square. It is inserted within the outer one and receives the soiling, so the laundering of diapers is largely confined to the smaller cloths.

It is the practice with a great many people to use an oiled silk or sheet-rubber diaper outside the bird's-eye or canton flannel for the purpose of protecting the outer clothing. This is a very unhealthy practice. The imperviousness of the protecting rubber prevents evaporation from about the buttocks' and genitals, and also the evaporation of the watery elements of the urine and feces, with the result that these are confined to irritate and often excoriate the tender integument of the infant. There are objections, not only from this point of view, but also from the fact that the very cumbersomeness tends to cause additional bowing of the thighs.

Binder.—I have long since discarded the use of the belly-band as an article of infant dress, as also the infant shirt. The former tends to prevent normal distension of the abdomen arising from the formation of gases, and thus interferes with the proper circulation of blood in the abdominal walls and viscera, this being one of the prolific causes of infantile colic. Furthermore, prior to the separation of the cord it is apt to adhere to the band and be dragged upon, to the child's discomfort and the possible resulting of umbilical hernia. As belly-bands are not needed by other members of the animal kingdom no more are they necessary with human infants. The shirt is objectionable in that it is apt to gather in folds across the back and even up to the armpits, to say nothing of the inconvenience and annoyance of the unnecessary dressing belonging to the ordinary toilet of the infant. For the first few months no harsh points, puffs, frills or furbelows should characterize the infant toilet. Pointed tapes, crochet work, harsh embroidery, no matter how pretty, are an abomination in connection with the infant wardrobe. In southern climates only a garment or two in addition



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