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ENGLISH

INFANT MORTALITY
IN THE
RURAL AFRICAN POPULATION



19 JAN 1954



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INFANT MORTALITY IN THE RURAL AFRICAN POPULATION

The basic reasons for the large number of deaths of African children in the early years of life are threefold:

- (1) Ignorance of certain essential points in the care and feeding of young children.
 - (2) Lack of certain foodstuffs necessary for their proper feeding.
 - (3) Poor standards of hygiene.
2. The problem is a vast one and can only be approached gradually in the rural areas. Skilled advice, welfare clinics, facilities for proper feeding and improvements in hygiene and sanitation are at present only available in the towns and, for the present, cannot be made available in the rural areas.
3. Our attempts to tackle the problem can only start in a very simple way and every effort must be made to stress the basic facts and to impress upon Africans why it is that so many young children die and, above all, to point out what the Africans themselves can do to help to improve matters.
4. Simple advice, which it is suggested could be impressed upon rural Africans and which covers the main causes of infant mortality, is now briefly summarised:

A.—CARE OF INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

(a) *Warmth.* Children are more susceptible to disease than adults, and should be protected from chills and draughts and from cold. Extra clothing should be put on in wet and cold weather and baby should be wrapped up warmly in a cot or box at night. Keeping warm does not mean shutting them up in a hut with no air, but protecting them with clothing in the open air.

(b) *Dry Clothing.* In the wet season it is essential that the baby should be protected from the rain, and if it gets wet the clothing should be changed as soon as possible. Wet clothing is a predisposing cause of pneumonia and bronchitis.

(c) *Protection.* The young child should not be allowed to crawl around in the dirt and dust: it is likely to pick up anything it can find and put it into its mouth. This is a very common cause of gastro-intestinal diseases and dysentery. At night the baby should be protected from mosquitoes by a piece of netting over the cot. Malaria is responsible for a number of infant deaths.

B.—FEEDING OF CHILDREN AND CHOICE OF FOODS

Wherever possible all babies should be breast-fed until at least six months old. At six months additional food should be given and a chart showing a variety of suitable foods and methods of preparation and feeding appears at the end of this pamphlet. In addition, an excellent book, *How to Cook for your Family*, by Miss Cartwright, Education Officer, and Miss Robertson, of the Jeanes School, Chalimbana, gives instructions and recipes for

the preparation of children's foods, soups, etc. It is recommended that all those interested in this important and worthwhile work should consult the book and use it in conjunction with this pamphlet.

It should be borne in mind that the age of six to eight months, with its transition from breast-feeding only to breast-feeding supplemented by other foods, is an extremely critical period in the life of any infant. Very strict attention to the advice given in this pamphlet is therefore essential at this age.

C.—HYGIENE

(a) *General.* Much disease, capable of causing death or severe and lasting disability, is caused by dirty environment. If the villages are not kept clean and sanitation, such as latrines and refuse disposal, neglected, flies will breed and spread dysentery, diseases of the eyes and a number of other diseases. The remedy here is obvious, but it should be remembered that communal effort is necessary as otherwise one individual is capable of endangering the health of the entire village. Proper, though not necessarily complicated or expensive, sanitation measures are also essential. For instance, dumping of refuse just outside a village boundary will improve the appearance of the village, but will do little to lessen the amount of fly-breeding affecting the population. To achieve success here it is imperative that every individual should realise the reason for sanitation measures and should be fully aware of the need for his full and responsible co-operation.

(b) *Personal.* Cleanliness of person is also of the greatest importance. Infants should be bathed daily with clean water and soap, if available. Bathing should be done in a sheltered place and, as mentioned before, exposure to cold after bathing should be avoided or at least reduced to a minimum.

5. All the above precautions become of paramount importance when any epidemic diseases, such as measles or whooping cough, are present and particularly when such is the case during the cold weather. Due observance of the simple rules detailed above will often swing the balance, in the case of an infant who contracts infectious disease, in favour of survival. Only too often, neglect of all or any of the rules means—Death!

6. The Health Department's role, in addition to furthering the general measures already mentioned, will be:

(a) The training of African midwives and nurses with a view to providing these at rural health centres. An important part of their work at these centres will be to teach the rural people simple and easily adopted methods of suitable feeding and general care of their infants and young children on the principles described, and

(b) the training of more Health Orderlies to work under Native Authorities on the gradual improvement on sound lines of rural hygiene and sanitation. Such improvement would, *per se*, reduce to a noticeable extent the present infant mortality by, for example, reducing the occurrence of the diseases carried by flies.

7. It will be appreciated that the provision of trained personnel by the Health Department must necessarily be a slow and gradual process. No spectacular results may be expected but work and propaganda on the lines detailed above, carried out by the large number of Europeans who work in close contact with the rural African, could do most useful work in preparing the way for the welfare service which it is hoped one day will be established and available to all African villages.

RECIPES

MEALIE MEAL PORRIDGE

Half cup meal.
Two cups water.
One spoon sugar.
Salt to taste.

METHOD:

1. Add salt to water and put on fire to boil.
2. Wash meal with cold water to remove husks.
3. Mix meal with half cup cold water.
4. Add to water in pot when it boils, stirring all the time for five to ten minutes.
5. Let porridge stand at side of fire for half an hour, stirring occasionally.
6. Beat well and add sugar and give to child.

NOTE.—Oats can be used instead of mealies, but must be well pounded and husks removed before cooking.

BONE BROTH

Bones of meat or fowl.
One pint water.
Salt to taste.
One carrot grated.

METHOD:

1. Wash the bones, scrape the carrot.
2. Put bones, carrot and salt into water and put on fire to boil.
3. Boil gently for two hours.
4. Remove bones and strain, and give to child.

BEAN SOUP

One cup beans.
Four cups water.
Salt to taste.
(Half cup of milk and bones can be added if available.)

METHOD:

1. Soak beans overnight and remove skins.
2. Add beans, salt and bones to water and boil for two to three hours or until beans are soft.
3. Remove bones.
4. Beat well to mash the beans.
5. Stir in the milk.

SWEET POTATO SOUP

Two large potatoes.
One pint water.
Salt to taste.
Half cup of milk and bones if available.

METHOD:

1. Peel potatoes and cut into thin slices.
2. Add to salt and water and bones, and boil for two hours.
3. Remove bones. Beat until potatoes are mashed.
4. Add milk and boil up again.

If the potatoes are scrubbed before peeling, the peelings can be boiled in water, and that water when strained used for making the soup.

This method is used for all vegetables—pumpkin, tomatoes, cabbage, spinach, carrots, and all green relish.

FISH SOUP

Bones of fish.

One cup water.

Salt.

Half cup milk.

METHOD:

1. Break up the bones.
2. Add to water and salt and boil slowly for one and a half hours.
3. Strain off liquid and add milk and serve.

BANANA OR PAWPAW CREAM

One ripe banana or pawpaw.

One tablespoon milk.

One teaspoon sugar.

METHOD:

1. Wash and peel the fruit.
2. Mash with a fork or spoon until smooth.
3. Add sugar and milk.

PAWPAW DRINK

Seeds from two ripe pawpaws.

Lemon juice or orange juice.

Sugar to taste.

METHOD:

1. Put the seeds in a basin or jug.
2. Pour on enough boiling water to cover them.
3. Leave for two to three hours.
4. Strain and add fruit juice and sugar.
5. Add two cups of cold water.

PINEAPPLE JUICE

One pineapple.

Sugar to taste.

Half glass water.

METHOD:

1. Wash pineapple and peel.
2. Grate the pineapple, cutting out the core.
3. Strain through sieve or muslin.
4. Add water and sugar.

NOTE.—The pineapple may be boiled first if preferred. Tomato or orange juice is prepared in the same way.

AGE	BREAST FEEDS	PORRIDGE OR GRUEL	SOUP	FRUIT JUICE	EXTRAS
6-8 months	Four during day	One feed a day mealie meal porridge or oat gruel *		Orange juice or tomato juice*	Boiled water between feed
9-11 months	Three during day	Two feeds a day mealie meal porridge or oat gruel	One feed of either— Bone broth, Bean soup, Ground-nut soup, Green vegetable soup, Mashed sweet potato soup, Spinach soup, Mashed pumpkin.	Orange juice or Tomato juice or Pawpaw. Pineapple juice.	Boiled water. Toast crust to chew.
12-18 months	Breast feed night and morning	Two feeds of mealie meal porridge or oat gruel	Two feeds of any of the following: Fish soup, Meat soup, Ground-nut soup, Vegetable soup, Pounded green vegetables, Mashed carrots, Soft-boiled eggs, Mashed sweet potato. Mashed avacado pear.	Mashed pawpaw. Orange juice. Tomato juice. Mashed banana. Mango fool. Pineapple juice.	Boiled water. Bread and butter. Toast crusts.
After 14 months		Mealie meal porridge	Chicken or fish cooked and minced plus any of above.	As above	As above

* Start with two tablespoonfuls and increase as child gets older.

1952

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<p>15-18 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>	<p>1-2 months</p>
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