

MEDICINE

Crayons May Hold Danger

The coloring used in some wax crayons may be poisonous when eaten by a child. Most parents and physicians seem unaware of this danger.

► WAX crayons, common playthings of most children, are really a greater menace than most parents realize. The case of a little boy who ate two of them, was poisoned, and almost died is reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (Dec. 6).

Parents, supervisors and doctors believe that no harm will result from eating these crayons, declares Dr. Esther B. Clark of the Palo Alto Clinic of Palo Alto, Calif. She, herself, shared this belief until her experience with this case. The danger, apparently, is that of the coloring matter put into the wax of the crayon becoming converted into an aniline dye in the body with serious if not fatal results.

A two-year-old boy in critical condition was brought to her office. The nurse at the child's nursery school thought he was having a heart attack. He was intensely blue, with nearly black lips. Since a physical examination revealed his heart and lungs to be normal, poisoning was suspected and he was given an X-ray examination which revealed foreign matter in his stomach and intestines. Immediately his stomach was washed out and large quantities of orange and yellow crayon were obtained.

While the wax crayons were being washed out of his stomach and intestines, the boy was in very bad condition; his

skin became cold and damp; he lost his gag reflex; his whole body was a blue-black color and the blood taken for blood count was chocolate brown.

He was then put in an oxygen tent and given a transfusion. In nine hours he showed improvement and by the next morning his color was almost normal, he talked, ate and drank normally, and walked around in his crib.

Dr. Clark points out that both the mother and father had noticed the bluish color of the boy the night before and "his mother tried to wash the blue color off his hands, thinking that it was paint." It was not until late the next morning that illness was suspected.

The physician thinks it significant that although the nurse observed him eating a crayon and scooped it out of his mouth, it "was considered to be so harmless that the fact was not reported, and was brought out only on questioning."

"The use of para red or other coloring material which could possibly be converted into paranitroaniline, or into other aniline dye in the body, should certainly be discontinued in the manufacture of crayons intended to be used by children," Dr. Clark declares. "If their use is to be continued, warning of danger should be placed on the crayons and on the box."

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can usually be fed safely in amounts required without having to compute caloric value.

Women who are to become mothers should be educated to correct attitudes which now make many mothers reluctant to feed their babies. Some of the reasons given for this reluctance are disgust, loss of a good figure, nervousness, fear of getting fat, objections of the husband, shame at having to nurse the baby before the other children, painfulness of the experience or feeling that the routine is too confining.

On the other hand, if the mother is in poor health or is ill, with tuberculosis for example, she should not be allowed to feed her baby. In such instances the infant will get approximately the same amount of gratification and close contact with the mother if properly held during bottle feeding. It is generally believed that infants should not be fed while they are lying on a table or bed, or by means of bottle proppers.

Science News Letter, December 13, 1947

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Streptomycin May Aid Patients with Vertigo

► A NEW use for streptomycin, famous mold chemical which has proved a valuable remedy for many infections, was reported by Dr. Edmund P. Fowler, Jr., of New York at the meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in Chicago.

Vertigo is the condition for which Dr. Fowler tried streptomycin, with benefit to some patients. There is a kind of poetic justice in this, since vertigo is one of the unpleasant symptoms that has occasionally afflicted patients getting streptomycin for treatment of some infectious diseases.

Dr. Fowler used the mold chemical for a kind of vertigo typical of middle ear disturbance. Its use for this condition was suggested by Joseph E. Hawkins, Jr., of Merck and Company.

Vertigo is a peculiar and often disabling condition in which the patient feels that the world is revolving around him or that he is revolving in space. It is not the same as the dizziness which is a feeling of unsteadiness and of movement within the head. It may result from disease of the middle ear, Meniere's disease, or organic brain disease.

Dr. Fowler believes streptomycin probably should not be used for any patient with vertigo who is over 50 years old.

Science News Letter, December 13, 1947

NUTRITION-PSYCHOLOGY

Babies Need Mother's Milk

► BREAST-FEEDING for babies now gets an official OK by one of the nation's top scientific bodies, the National Research Council. A report by one of its committees, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (Dec. 6), states that babies need their mother's milk for its nutritional value and to make them stable emotionally, to give them a feeling of security and to establish normal mother-child relationships.

Dr. C. Anderson Aldrich of the Mayo Clinic is chairman of the committee.

The infant is not the sole beneficiary

of this relationship, for the mother matures physiologically and psychologically by performing her normal maternal duties, the report states. But the committee finds that concrete proof of the psychological value to the mother of feeding her infant is badly needed.

Infants belonging to lower-income families are especially benefited by receiving mothers' milk because they lack the attention of a skilled physician. Human milk prevents or decreases the severity of many intestinal disturbances, is an economical food for infants and