

PUBLIC HEALTH

Pre-School Check-Up

General health, and particularly eyes, ears and teeth should be checked by doctors before fall school season. Behavior defects should be corrected.

► JUNIOR, aged six, is ready to start school for the first time this month. He has a new pencil and a new tablet or copy-book and probably a pair of shiny new shoes. If his parents are wise he has also had a health check-up with the family doctor or his own pediatrician (child specialist).

When children start school is the time they start "catching" measles, whooping cough and other childhood diseases. They can be protected from many of these ailments and the family doctor or pediatrician will advise about this.

Every child should be vaccinated against smallpox before entering school, and he can be protected against whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus, or lockjaw. Most doctors advise giving these protective treatments before the child is one year old, but if that has not been done, Junior should be taken to the doctor for them now.

When the doctor gives Junior his pre-school check-up, he will look for such signs of health as bright eyes, rosy cheeks, firm muscles and an erect posture. He will examine heart and lungs, nose and throat. He will ask whether Junior has been gaining steadily in weight and growing in height.

Junior may be smaller than other boys his age and still be perfectly healthy. There is a great difference between children in this respect, but it is important that each child show a steady gain.

If Junior's posture is poor, the doctor may ask what he eats and how much he sleeps. A child may slump instead of standing straight because he is a little tired or is undernourished. In a young child the defect in posture can usually be corrected by such simple measures as plenty of sleep, proper food and exercises to strengthen and by teaching the child how to use his muscles.

Healthy Eyes, Ears

If a child has trouble seeing the blackboard, if the letters in his reading book are blurred, if he cannot hear the teacher or if he has a toothache, he cannot be expected to learn and bring home good marks from school. Yet many children start school suffering from such a handicap, often not knowing themselves what the trouble is.

Sometimes the child will complain of headache or hurting eyes, or the teacher will be quick about detecting the trouble. The wisest course, however, is to have the child's eyes examined by a qualified eye doctor before he starts to school. If there are any defects, he can be given glasses to

correct them, and will not have any handicap to his progress in learning.

Poor hearing is another condition that often makes children seem backward and dull. In some schools hearing tests are given to all the children. You can make sure that your child will not get off to a bad start through poor hearing by having his own doctor make the test.

If there is any defect, the doctor will advise about putting him in a special class and having him learn lip-reading to make up for the defect. The steps to be taken will depend on the extent of hearing defect or loss.

When Junior and Sister are ready to start school, they probably have acquired their six-year molars. These are the first and most important of the permanent teeth and should be carefully watched and any cavities filled promptly, so that these important grinders will last throughout Junior's or Sister's life.

A visit to the dentist before starting school is therefore in order, unless the children are already making regular visits for a check on the health of their teeth. They will begin to lose their baby teeth soon after starting school, but these should not be lost prematurely through decay because they are needed to keep the mouth in the right shape for the permanent teeth.

Behavior Defects

By the time a child starts to school, his parents should have him well on the road to good behavior. This is not just a matter of obedience, though many parents seem to expect the school to make over the youngster and enforce the discipline they have neglected.

The overly docile child who always obeys but has no playmates and no interest in games is suffering from a behavior defect as is the extremely sullen, unruly youngster or the one given to temper tantrums.

Such abnormal behavior is a sign of emotional difficulty that needs correcting just as much as poor eyesight or impaired hearing. If the trouble is deep-seated and serious, school routine and discipline are not likely to correct it. Instead, the child may turn truant from school and get into trouble that might bring him into the courts.

Much of the responsibility for the child's ability to handle emotional problems, or lack of such ability, rests on the parents, the way they train him during his early years, and the home environment they provide for him. Schools also have some responsibility

in seeing that the needs of the child, especially the teen-age child, are met.

The child from a home shadowed by misery and destitution may go to school hungry in body and insecure and fearful in his mental and emotional life. Even if his home is good in a material way, it may not provide him with a feeling of security and an opportunity to develop his self-confidence. The child who is over-protected by too anxious parents, or neglected by too busy ones, or misunderstood by parents who are careless of his needs may have serious difficulty in adjusting at school.

Scolding, punishments, stricter discipline at home or in school will only make matters worse. Instead, the child should be taken to a doctor or guidance clinic to have the cause of the trouble discovered and corrected.

Science News Letter, September 1, 1951

GENERAL SCIENCE

Scientists Mobilize to Save Science Foundation

► THE NATION'S scientists, engineers and technicians are being mobilized to try to save the National Science Foundation.

More than 225 scientific societies have received urgent requests from the American Association for the Advancement of Science—top American scientific body—for action in trying to restore the 98% cut in funds for the NSF made recently by the House of Representatives.

The House reduced the appropriation for fiscal year 1952 from \$14,000,000 to \$300,000. Whether the cut will be restored depends on the Senate Appropriations Committee which is expected to act soon.

The money cut out by the House was designed to pay for aid in fundamental research and fellowships to young scientists.

Dr. Howard Meyerhoff, executive secretary of the AAAS, in announcing this mobilization of scientists, declared that the action of the House was "shortsighted and detrimental to the security of the nation."

He said that "we are desperately short of trained scientists and we have about used up our stock of fundamental scientific knowledge. We must remain out in front of the Soviet Union in technological developments. The \$13,700,000 denied to the National Science Foundation by the House was designed to help us do this."

Scientific organizations will be urged to make known to Senators the need to the nation of the two programs of the NSF. In addition, college presidents, particularly of technical and engineering institutions, are expected to ask the Senate to restore the cut.

Science News Letter, September 1, 1951

Over 1,000,000 pounds of rice have been contributed by Brazil to children of India.