Dear Friend:

Your baby is now in his fourth month, and growing rapidly. Let me warn you against taking the baby into bed with you in the night. This is a bad habit for any baby to form and especially for one fed from the breast, for it often happens that the habit of nursing two or three times during the night is acquired without the mother fully realizing it, as she is only partly awake. I know that it is a temptation, when your baby is crying, to take the child into your bed and a temptation made all the greater when you discover how contentedly your little one goes off to sleep when snuggled close to your side. Nevertheless, do not do it, for once the habit is formed, like all habits, it is hard to break.

In my last letter I told you what to do for the bowels when they were constipated; but a still more vital question for little babies is looseness of the bowels, particularly for bottle-fed babies. This is true at any season of the year but be especially careful in the summertime. If there is the slightest tendency to diarrhoea, your physician's attention should be called to it immediately. When the attack is sudden and accompanied with fever, all feedings should be stopped and nothing but water allowed for twenty-four hours.

When your baby's bowels become loose in the wintertime, if there is no fever, probably some more or less important error in the food is at the bottom of the trouble. Breast-fed babies may have three or four slightly loose movements a day and this alone is no cause for alarm as long as there is no fever, no colic, and the baby is not sick in any way and is gaining well in weight. Like all illnesses in infancy, diarrhoea is much harder on the bottle-fed infant than on the breast-fed and is much more difficult for the physician to cure.

As you probably know, the main cause of diarrhoea among bottle-fed babies, is unclean or improperly produced milk. It is often the lack of knowledge of modern methods of dairying that gives rise to poor milk which in turn causes diarrhoea.
Producing good milk is a matter of absolute cleanliness and immediate cooling. The cow's udders and bag should be washed before milking and the milker's hands thoroughly cleansed so that the milk will have no chance of becoming contaminated with bacteria from these sources. Only sterilized pails and sterilized pans should be used. If the milk is cooled immediately and kept at a temperature of 45 degrees until you are ready to use it, the accumulation of bacteria—which all cows' milk contains and breast milk is free from—will be prevented. If there is any doubt in your mind as to the purity of the milk you are giving your baby, boil it actively for three minutes, allowing it to cool immediately and keeping it so until you are ready to use it. The milk from full-blooded Guernsey or Jersey cows should not be used unless the baby is exceptionally strong and sturdy, for it is too rich in fat for the average baby. Holstein milk has less fat and is far better for your baby's digestion.

Many mothers write me about a remedy for whooping cough under the impression that this disease is merely a heavy cold. I cannot warn you too strongly against neglecting to secure medical attention at once.

Whooping cough in children under 5 years of age is almost as fatal as scarlet fever and diphtheria, according to the records of the various State Boards of Health. A number of other illnesses are often traced back to attacks of whooping cough which are neglected. In little babies whooping cough is especially dangerous because they do not know how to expel the mucus which chokes them.

At present a great deal of work is being done with immunization for whooping cough with vaccine. As yet, we are not in a position to say whether or not it is effective. Let your doctor use his judgment in the matter.

This brings me to another thing: the danger of kissing on the mouth, which many women regard lightly. Do not allow anyone to kiss your baby on the mouth or hands. Many people who seem perfectly well and healthy have an insidious disease that may be communicated to your baby by a kiss. It is the most direct way of transmitting infection.

Of course some people will laugh at you and say you are fussy, but then these same people are amused at "system" in the feeding of babies. They are like farmers who continue to raise poor cattle and poor crops because they scorn new
methods. Do not let anyone's ridicule of your ideas affect you, because you are doing the wisest and best thing for your baby.

Cordially yours,

Sarah Logan Francis

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