

Contaminated Milk Powder and Intestinal Myiasis

Myiasis is invasion of tissues and organs by the larvae (maggots) of various species of flies. They may be specific obligate parasites or semispecific or accidental facultative parasites. Myiasis may affect the skin, eye, nasopharynx, ear, intestines or urethra. Children are particularly vulnerable to myiasis through either outdoor exposure or the ingestion of fly contaminated food.

Intestinal myiasis results from ingestion of food contaminated with the eggs or larvae of several genera of flies; some survive passage through the stomach and later mature in the intestine before they are extruded in the stool. The common housefly *Musca domestica*, *M. vicina*, *M. nebulosa* and *M. sorbens* are involved in intestinal myiasis(1). In United States, the species most commonly involved is *Tubifera tenax* and *Sarcophaga* species(2,3).

A 15-day-old boy weighing 3.6 kg was brought to the hospital with complaints of abdominal distension and vomiting. The child was kept under observation and on the second day of admission the mother of the child complained of passage of worms in stool. The stool of the child was collected and contained numerous active, whitish, headless, segmented, wormlike organisms about 6-8 mm in size. The organisms from freshly passed stool were examined under microscope (X5) and were found to be larvae of *Musca domestica*.

A search for the source of infection was initiated and when the powder milk tin was examined it was found to contain thousands of pearly white eggs (1 mm in size) and a few larvae. The powder milk tin was kept open by the mother and the family was living in a locality having poor sanitation.

The milk powder was stopped immediately, fresh cow's milk started, hydration maintained and the baby observed. The vomiting and distension gradually subsided over a period of 5 to 7 days and the larvae ceased to appear in the stool after 7 days.

There are many reports of intestinal myiasis in adults(4,5) but very few in the newborns(3). If a newborn is fed milk contaminated with eggs of housefly, the eggs pass through the stomach and hatch in the intestine and larvae are found in the stools within 5 to 7 days time. In the hot temperate climate of India, powdered milk can easily be contaminated with eggs of housefly and lead to intestinal myiasis in newborn. It is, therefore, necessary to instruct the mothers whose children are fed powder milk to keep the lid tightly closed after use in a clean place and to use a clean, dry spoon to take out the powder.

Intestinal myiasis is usually self-limiting and the larvae cease to appear in stools 2 to 7 days after withdrawal of the contaminated milk powder. In some children given such feeds for a longer duration, vomiting and distension may lead to fluid, electrolyte and nutritional disturbances and they may succumb to the illness. The possibility of intestinal myiasis should, therefore, also be considered in children with these symptoms and the milk formula and stools examined for the presence of larvae of housefly.

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Baby Enemy Cots

Many baby friendly hospitals, ideal in many respects abound with "Baby Enemy Cots". These are the less than four and a half feet long cots that ensure that mother cannot sleep next to the child (*Fig.*). The baby who comes with a physical illness suffers from a psychological trauma of being deprived of the cozy comfort of sleeping close to the mother. A visit at late hours to these hospitals shows many vacant cots with the mother and the sick baby sleeping on the floor, or a restless baby on the cot and a half asleep tired mother sitting next to the baby.

Hospitals spending huge sums to buy expensive instruments and services to serve the baby must have cots which accommodate the baby and the mother. What the sick



Fig. A baby enemy cot.

restless baby needs most is her comforting mother.

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