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IODIDE OF POTASSIUM IN ECZEMA.

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THE importance of having at command a number of constitutional remedies which are capable, either directly or indirectly, of exerting a favorable influence in so obstinate a cutaneous disease as eczema, is appreciated by all whose practice calls upon them to treat such cases. Probably the most reliable remedy in the average case of eczema is arsenic; but often enough it fails to have an appreciable effect, and, indeed, not infrequently its action is prejudicial, even in cases in which the probability of its good effects was scarcely questionable.

Iodide of potassium is a remedy, which in a number of cases has rendered me good service, and is one, moreover, that is rarely capable of seriously aggravating the disease, as occasionally happens in the administration of arsenic. With the experience so far at command, it would be impossible to say in what particular class of cases it may be found useful.

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The impression formed, however, would indicate that it is of greatest advantage in subacute and chronic eczema, in which the inflammation is of a moderate grade. Moreover, it seems to have a greater influence in the eczema occurring in persons otherwise apparently in good health. In fact, if a positive conclusion were yet warrantable, it would be to the effect that the remedy finds its greatest use in those cases in which such tonics as cod-liver oil, iron, and bark, are contraindicated. In broken-down subjects, and especially in cases in which the disease has been superinduced by mental worry and overwork, it seems to have but little value; and in cases in which dyspepsia is the main predisposing cause, it rarely benefits, but, on the contrary, will often aggravate. In eczema of the lower extremities, due in part to a varicose condition of the veins, it has but little influence. Nor is its use confined to the adult. In several remarkably obstinate and relapsing cases of eczema in children, it brought about a permanent cure where other remedies failed to have the slightest effect.

The beginning dose for a child of the age of six months to a year, should be a half grain, increased to a grain, or even to two grains, and given three times daily. In children past the age of one year and under three the dose may be one grain, and increased to three grains; in older children, five-grain doses may be reached with favorable effect. It is best administered to children in water flavored with syrup of orange-peel or ginger; in some cases in which the remedy thus prescribed causes gastric uneasiness, a small quantity of a bitter tincture may be

substituted for the syrup with advantage. In the adult, the dose at first should be not more than five grains, three times daily, and later increased, if found necessary. If ten-grain doses fail, it is more than probable that larger doses will also be without effect, or may even aggravate. The remedy is not to be continued if it causes persistent nausea. It is borne much more readily when given in Huxham's tincture, or the compound tincture of gentian, than in syrup mixtures. As a rule, it should be taken well diluted about thirty minutes before meals. There are, of course, exceptions to such a rule. With some persons a dose of medicine before the morning meal excites nausea and vomiting; with such, a dose may be prescribed before the midday and evening meals, and at bedtime. Occasionally it is best borne about two hours after eating. Certainly the remedy seems to have more effect taken when the stomach is empty, provided, of course, it causes no gastric disturbance.

To rely upon any internal treatment exclusively, however, for the relief and cure of an eczema, would mean invariable disappointment. With the potassium iodide, no less than any other remedy, a suitable plan of external treatment is a necessity, if relief is to be expected. Constitutional remedies will often modify the morbid action of the skin so as to promote the favorable effect of external treatment, and render such favorable results permanent; to expect more than this would lead to repeated failures. In conclusion, this particular remedy—potassium iodide—although of great benefit in some cases, will, unfortunately, be found valueless in others.