

HEALTH DEPARTMENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

LAW AND REGULATIONS

TO

PREVENT THE SPREAD

OF

SCARLET FEVER AND DIPHTHERIA

IN THE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

TOGETHER WITH

Directions as to Disinfection and Disinfectants

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AN ACT TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF SCARLET FEVER AND DIPHThERIA IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, That from and after the passage of this act it shall be the duty of every registered practicing physician or other person prescribing for the sick in the District of Columbia to make report to the health officer, on forms to be furnished by that officer, immediately after such practitioner becomes aware of the existence of any case of scarlet fever or diphtheria in his charge; and in case such person shall fail to so report within twenty-four hours he shall be subject to a penalty of not less than five nor more than fifty dollars, and in case of a second offense the penalty shall be not less than ten nor more than one hundred dollars. In case no physician shall be in charge of such patient the householder where such case occurred, or person in charge thereof, the parent, guardian, nurse, or other person in attendance upon the sick person knowing the character of the disease shall make the report above mentioned, and

Duty of physician,
parent, guardian,
nurse, or other person
in charge of patient.

in case of failure to report shall suffer the same penalties as provided for physicians in this act.

Placard or flag to be displayed; unlawful to remove same; premises to be disinfected.

SEC. 2. That it shall be the duty of the health officer co-operating with the attending physician to cause a suitable placard, flag, or warning sign to be displayed from the front of the premises or apartment where any one case of scarlet fever or diphtheria is present. It shall be unlawful for any person to remove such placard, sign, or warning flag, when so placed, without permission of the health officer, and it shall be the duty of the said health officer, in conjunction with the attending physician, to cause the premises to be properly disinfected, and to issue the necessary instructions for the isolation of the patient.

Persons affected not to attend school nor public assemblages, nor appear on streets.

Penalty for violation of provisions of this act.

Health Officer to prescribe regulations.

SEC. 3. That no person shall visit or attend any public or private school, or place of public assemblage, or appear on the public streets or in the parks while affected with scarlet fever or diphtheria, and any adult person, parent, or guardian of a minor convicted of having knowingly violated the provisions of this act shall, upon conviction, forfeit and pay a sum not less than five nor more than fifty dollars; and it shall be the duty of physicians while in attendance upon cases of scarlet fever or diphtheria to exercise such reasonable precautions to prevent

the spread of the said diseases as may be prescribed by the health officer of the District of Columbia in regulations.

SEC. 4. That no person who has convalesced from diphtheria or scarlet fever shall be allowed to attend any public or private school, seminary, or college until the attending physician shall have furnished a certificate that said patient has completely recovered, and that there is no danger of infection to other persons. All persons who shall, after convalescing from diphtheria or scarlet fever, visit schools, seminaries, or colleges, without providing themselves with such certificates, shall suffer the penalties provided for in section 1 of this act.

Convalescents not to attend schools, seminaries, or colleges, except upon certificate.

SEC. 5. That the provisions of this act shall apply to every ship, vessel, steamer, boat, or craft lying or being in the rivers, harbors, or other waters within the jurisdiction of said District, and to every tent, van, shed, hovel, barn, out-house, cabin, or other like place, as if the same were an ordinary dwelling.

Where provision of the act shall apply.

SEC. 6. That the word "regulations," as herein used, shall be held to mean also rules, orders, and amendments. The words "person in charge thereof" shall be held to mean the owner, his agent or factor; the tenant, his clerk or representative; the nurse, or any one or more persons who by

What the terms "regulations," "persons," and "practitioner of medicine" shall be held to mean.

reason of their position are charged with the management or care of the premises, or interested in the person afflicted. The words "practitioner of medicine," or "practitioner," shall be held to include all persons who undertake to treat persons afflicted, either gratuitously or for pay.

Penalty for making false report or certificate.

SEC. 7. That any person who shall knowingly make, sign, or deliver any false report or certificate herein provided for, upon conviction thereof in the police court of said District, shall be fined not less than five nor more than fifty dollars, and, in default of payment thereof, be committed to jail for not less than one nor more than twenty days.

Jurisdiction for enforcement of act vested in Police Court.

SEC. 8. That the expenses necessarily incurred in the execution of the provisions of this act shall be borne from the general appropriation for the maintenance of the health department of the District of Columbia, and the jurisdiction of civil and criminal procedure in the enforcement of this act is hereby vested in the police court of the said District, with the same right of appeal as in other civil and criminal trials in said District.

Approved, December 20, 1890.

AN ACT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
PREVENTION OF DISEASES IN THE DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA, APPROVED JUNE 19, 1872

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That the proprietor of any tenement house, lodging house, boarding house, or hotel in the District of Columbia shall, in the event of any person living in such house becoming afflicted with any such disease,* at once notify the board of health thereof, in writing. For a refusal to give the notice herein provided, the person so offending shall be liable to a fine of not less than ten dollars nor more than fifty dollars for each offense.

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That any person suffering from any such infectious or contagious disease, who shall wilfully expose himself in any street, public place, or conveyance, or any person having the care, charge, or control of such diseased person, or any owner or driver of any such conveyance, who does not immediately provide for the disinfection of the same, after it has conveyed such diseased person, and

*Infectious or contagious diseases.

any person who gives, lends, sells, transmits, or exposes any clothing, bedding, rags, or other things which have been exposed to infection, shall, on conviction, be liable to a penalty of not less than ten dollars nor more than one hundred dollars for each offense.

SEC. 6. And be it further enacted, That any person who shall let to any other person any house, room, or part of a house in which any patient has been confined by reason of such disease, without having such room, house, or part of a house completely disinfected to the satisfaction of the board of health, as certified by them, such person shall be liable to a penalty of not less than ten dollars or more than fifty dollars for each offense.

REGULATIONS

The following regulations, provided for in the Act of Congress, approved, December 20, 1890, are promulgated for the information of all concerned :

The Act referred to provides in Section 2, "That it shall be the duty of the Health Officer, in conjunction with the attending physician, to cause the premises to be properly disinfected, and to issue the necessary

instructions for the isolation of the patient ;” in Section 3, “That it shall be the duty of physicians, while in attendance upon cases of scarlet fever and diphtheria, to exercise such reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of the said diseases as may be prescribed by the Health Officer of the District of Columbia, in regulations ;” in Section 6, “That the word ‘regulations’ as herein used shall be held to mean also rules, orders, and amendments.”

1. The term scarlet fever as applied in the Act shall be held to include scarlatina, scarlet rash, and canker rash, and *each and every case* must be reported upon the forms provided.

2. The term diphtheria as applied in the Act shall be held to include membranous croup, unless a bacteriological examination made by a competent person, has proved that the Klebs-Loeffler bacillus is absent, and each and every case must be reported upon the forms provided.

3. Warning signs shall remain displayed on houses in cases of scarlet fever for a period of not less than four weeks, and in cases of diphtheria for not less than three weeks from date of report to the Health Officer, and for a longer period unless report of recovery by the physician in attendance has been made.

4. In case of death the warning sign shall remain displayed upon premises for a period of not less than seven days after the death, and longer, unless the Health Officer is satisfied that all proper means have been employed for prevention of the spread of the contagion.

5. It shall be the duty of the householder, in every case where a warning sign has been displayed from the premises which he or she occupies, to report promptly the removal of such sign at any time within the periods given.

6. It shall be the like duty of the physician in attendance to make such report to the Health Officer of the removal of warning signs, unless assured that report has been made by some one from the premises where the disease is prevailing or has prevailed.

7. It shall be the duty of the physician in attendance to report, in every instance, on the forms provided, whether or not children in the family or other children in the same building attend school, and at what school building or buildings.

8. Children shall not be permitted to return to school from infected premises, except upon presentation of the proper certificate from the Health Officer.

9. All persons suffering from either diphtheria or scarlet fever are to be isolated in rooms as far removed as possible from those occupied by other persons in the building, and upon the top floor where it is practicable. No person, other than the physician in attendance, the examining official, and the nurse or nurses, shall be admitted to such room during the prevalence of the disease. This room, if possible, should be large, well ventilated, and much exposed to sunlight.

10. Every room occupied by a patient suffering from either diphtheria or scarlet fever shall be cleared of all needless clothing, carpets, drapery, and other materials likely to harbor the poisons of the diseases. Dishes, spoons, wash rags, combs, brushes, etc., used in the sick room shall not be used in any other part of the house, nor shall they be washed or stored with similar articles from the rest of the house until they have been disinfected.

11. Soiled bed and body linen shall be immediately placed in vessels of water containing a solution of acid bi-chloride of mercury or other suitable disinfectant.

12. Discharges from the bowels and vomited matter shall be received in vessels containing at least one quart of such a disinfecting solution, and all vessels used shall be kept thoroughly clean and disinfected.

13. Discharges from the throat, nose and mouth shall be received upon pieces of cloth, which must be immediately burned.

14. All persons recovering from either diphtheria or scarlet fever shall be considered *dangerous*, and shall not be permitted to leave the sick room, to associate with others, or to attend school, church, or any public assembly, until a certificate has been furnished by the Health Officer to the effect that they may go abroad without danger of disseminating the contagion; and those nursing such patients shall not go to any public assembly, as to the market, churches, theatres, shops, or to their own places of business or work.

15. It shall be the duty of the person in charge of the premises where a case of diphtheria or scarlet fever exists, to exercise all reasonable care in the prevention of the commingling of persons who come in contact with the patient, or any other persons, whereby the contagion might be disseminated.

16. No family shall move away from any dwelling place while a warning card is displayed thereon, except with permission from the Health Officer.

17. The body of a person who has died from either diphtheria or scarlet fever shall be immediately disinfected and placed in a

coffin, which shall be tightly closed, and shall not be taken to a church or place of public assembly, and shall be buried within forty-eight hours, unless otherwise ordered by the Health Officer.

18. No public funeral shall be held in a dwelling in which there is a case of either diphtheria or scarlet fever, nor in which a death from either of said diseases has recently occurred. The term public funeral as used in this section shall be held to mean any funeral at which persons other than the officiating minister, the necessary pall-bearers and the immediate family of the deceased are present.

19. Immediately upon the complete recovery of a person who has been suffering from either diphtheria or scarlet fever, or upon the death of a person who has been so suffering, the room or rooms occupied shall be thoroughly disinfected and shall thereafter be thoroughly cleaned and exposed to currents of fresh air.

20. All clothing, bedding, carpets, and other textile fabrics, which have been exposed to the contagion of the disease shall be either burned, exposed to super-heated steam, thoroughly boiled, or soaked for two hours in a solution containing the proper quantity of acid bi-chloride of mercury.

21. No person shall interfere with or obstruct the entrance, inspection, and examination of any building or house, by the inspectors or officers of this department, when there has been reported the case of a person sick with either scarlet fever or diphtheria therein.

DISINFECTION

a. The vomit and discharges from the bowels of diphtheria and scarlet fever patients, should always be disinfected, especially the vomit. To do this, dissolve one pound of chloride of lime in two gallons of water (16 tumblerfuls of water equal a gallon) and put a quart of this liquid on each stool or vomit, mix, and let the mixture stand one hour before throwing it into the water closet or box privy.

b. For two or more weeks after the membrane in diphtheria has disappeared the disease germs may be present in the patient's mouth in swarms, and although he is convalescent himself he can infect others and any part of the house. Therefore, the patient should be kept apart from other persons and not allowed to go through the house for at least two weeks after the membrane has disappeared. (See section 14.) The virulent germ has been found in the mouths of those affected nearly three weeks after the mem-

brane has disappeared. Only a competent bacteriologist can determine whether the patient has become harmless.

In scarlet fever the infection of others can take place while the rash is present, and after the rash has disappeared while the skin is being shed. The outer skin comes off in scales of various sizes, but usually these scales are like dandruff. The shedding may continue for even twenty days in some cases, and during this time these skin particles are very infectious. It is well to rub a little sweet oil over the child's body from time to time, to prevent the scales from floating about the room. If patients suffering from diphtheria and scarlet fever are permitted to walk about the house too soon, it will be necessary to disinfect the entire house.

c. As soon as it is suspected that a child is ill with diphtheria or scarlet fever, even before the arrival of a physician, it should be taken away from all other children and be kept near the top of the house, if possible, in a room from which the carpet, rugs, curtains, and every unnecessary article of furniture has been removed, and upholstered chairs must be replaced with plain wooden ones. Should the case prove not to be diphtheria or scarlet fever no harm is done. If, however, the disease has not been recog-

nized until the rash is developed in scarlet fever, or the membrane in diphtheria, no article should then be removed, because it probably is infected. (See regulation No. 9.) People nursing diphtheria or scarlet fever patients should not go to market, to shops, to church, or to any public assembly, until after the final general disinfection, for fear of spreading infection. (See regulation No. 15.)

d. Disinfecting Solution.—For body linen and bed linen the most practical and reliable disinfectant is an acid corrosive sublimate solution (i. e. one part bichloride of mercury to two parts of hydrochloric acid.) In practice three ounces of commercial hydrochloric acid and one ounce and a half of bichloride of mercury will prove sufficient. A physician's prescription will be necessary. Use one teaspoonful of the solution to each gallon of water. The water containing this disinfectant must always be put into wooden vessels, as wash tubs or pails, or, if a small quantity is to be used, into china or earthenware vessels, because metals spoil the solution and are in turn destroyed by it. Measure the solution obtained from the druggist in an old teaspoon or a dose glass. This disinfectant is a very violent poison if swallowed, and care must be exercised in its use. It will not hurt the hands when

mixed with the water, but it will injure finger rings, which should, therefore, be removed before it is used. It is better than carbolic acid or any other solution and it has no odor.

After towels, sheets, body linen and like articles have been used during the course of the illness they should be soaked for two hours in this solution (i. e. one teaspoonful to the gallon of water), next rinsed in clean water and dried; thus they are rendered safe.

e. Those who are nursing patients ill with diphtheria or scarlet fever should wash their hands in the disinfectant solution *every time* they touch the patient or any article that has possibly been infected, then rinse their hands in clean water. This is to protect the nurse and others. Put half a teaspoonful of the disinfectant into two quarts of water in a china wash bowl or earthen-ware dish or wooden bucket for this purpose.

f. Do not handle a patient ill with either of these diseases more than is absolutely necessary, not only because of the danger of infection, but for other grave reasons. Diphtheria often affects the heart and one can then kill a patient by lifting him up roughly. It is, of course, especially dangerous to kiss a child ill with these diseases,

and the nurse must be exceedingly careful lest a diphtheria patient cough into her face.

g. If the patient get soiled with his own discharges wash him with ordinary water then disinfect the wash water and the wash rag with the disinfectant (a teaspoonful to the gallon of water) before throwing them away. As to the spittle of these patients see regulation No. 13.

h. Nurses and others caring for patients suffering from scarlet fever or diphtheria should wear over the other clothing while in the sick room a wrapper or gown which can be easily removed and left just inside the sick room. This wrapper should be dipped into the disinfecting solution as often as possible. It will be more convenient if two such wrappers are provided.

i. When the patient is well enough to leave the sick room (see regulation No. 14 and section *b*) his clothing is left behind, he is bathed, and then clothed in another room.

j. The best disinfectant for mattresses and blankets, and indeed everything, is streaming steam under pressure. This requires special apparatus and cannot be done at home. Mattresses, bolsters and pillows must be pulled apart and steamed if they are worth this. If they are old or cheap it is better to burn them. Upholstered furniture may be steamed entire or the upholstery may

be removed and burned, the framework being scoured and then washed with the disinfectant solution, (see section *d*), or the entire piece may be burned.

k. The sick room must not be swept during the illness or during the process of final disinfection, because germs are lifted up with the dust, to be inhaled at once or to settle upon the walls and elsewhere and cause infection later. Wipe the floor when necessary with wet rags, which are afterwards to be burned.

l. In the final disinfection after the bedding has been removed, and all carpets, rugs, curtains and other textile fabrics which were in the room have been soaked in the acid-corrosive sublimate solution, or have been removed by or with the authority of the Health Department to be steamed, take two or three loaves of fresh bread, cut these in halves, and rub down the walls thoroughly to remove all dust. Burn this bread. Now scrub the floor and all woodwork with ordinary suds. Pour into this suds as many teaspoonfuls of the disinfectant as there are gallons of scrub water, let it stand for an hour, then throw it away.

m. After scrubbing, thoroughly *flood* the floor, woodwork, bedstead, chairs, windows, transoms, bureau, *everything* in the room, with the disinfectant mentioned in section *d*.

Do not sprinkle it on, *flood* with it. Then dip a stiff brush into the solution and stipple the walls and ceiling (*i. e.* with the points of the hairs) till they are thoroughly wetted. The wall paper may be spoiled by this process but this is unavoidable.

n. Do not use the patent disinfectants, they are seldom effective. While the room is wet sulphur may be burned as an additional precaution, but when used alone ~~it~~ is very unreliable, especially against the diphtheria germs, and the Health Department will not consider a room disinfected if nothing but sulphur has been used.

o. For any *possible* good to be accomplished by sulphur it is necessary (1) that the articles to be disinfected be wet and be so placed as to be freely exposed to the fumes, (2) that the sulphur fumes be extremely concentrated, and (3) that the contact be prolonged at least 24 hours.

1. Wetting may be accomplished by washing with a wet cloth or by free steaming of the room; Closets, cupboards and drawers should be left wide open.

2. In order to secure concentration of the fumes it is necessary that *every* opening into the room be tightly closed. All crevices about doors, windows and transoms must be filled with paper or rags to prevent the escape of the sulphur fumes and the entrance of air.

3. The room should be left closed after the sulphur is lighted for at least twenty-four hours.

To burn sulphur, place two or three bricks on the bottom of a wash tub or other large vessel and put in water up to near the top of the bricks to prevent fire ; then set at least three pounds of sulphur on the bricks in an old tin plate or flat piece of metal and ignite it with hot coals. Leave the room at once and close the door.

p. In case of death from diphtheria or scarlet fever, wet a sheet with the disinfectant solution, using *two* teaspoonfuls to the gallon of water, and wrap up the body, covering the face in this sheet.

q. The directions for disinfection given here hold good for all infectious and contagious diseases, as tuberculosis, typhoid, small-pox, cholera, infectious pneumonia, measles, the grippe, and the like. When the stools of typhoid fever patients have been thrown into privies without disinfection, as may happen before the disease has been recognized, cover the surface of the privy contents with chloride of lime, after thoroughly disinfecting the woodwork with the disinfecting solution mentioned in paragraph *d.* If these stools have been thrown into a water-closet disinfect the woodwork

with the bi-chloride solution and then flush the basin with chloride of lime solution.

DISINFECTING SOLUTION.

Commercial Hydrochloric Acid, . 3 oz.

Bi-Chloride of Mercury, . . 1 ½ oz.

SIG.:—Poison. Use one teaspoonful to the gallon of water in a wooden vessel as directed on page 16.

WM. C. WOODWARD, M. D.,

Health Officer.

