

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

INDIAN BABIES  
HOW TO KEEP THEM WELL



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## FOREWORD.

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MY FRIENDS: Do you know that one Indian baby out of every three dies before it is 3 years old because it does not have the right kind of care?

The reports which I receive from superintendents, doctors, field matrons, and others show this to be true.

Do you know that a great many of these deaths can be prevented? It is not natural for a baby to be sick. Health is its normal condition. It is a pity, therefore, that so many Indian baby lives have been lost because *their mothers did not know* how to keep them well. Almost every sickness your baby has had could have been prevented.

You are very much interested in the welfare of Indian babies, and I am, too. I hope you will read this pamphlet and faithfully follow the suggestions it contains. Possibly you will find that some of these differ from what you have supposed to be the best rules for taking care of your baby. It is because so many Indian mothers follow wrong ideas in caring for their children that so many of them die.

I am sure, therefore, that if you will endeavor to care for your little ones as suggested in this pamphlet you will be rewarded with the best and most wonderful possession any of us may ever hope to attain—healthy and happy children.

At the close of this pamphlet you will find my "Save the Babies" letter of January 10, 1916.

Tell your friends about this pamphlet and explain it to those who can not read. If you desire more copies the superintendent, doctor, field matron, or any other Indian Service employee will be glad to obtain them for you.

Sincerely, your friend,



Commissioner.

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## INDIAN BABIES: HOW TO KEEP THEM WELL.

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### BEFORE THE BABY ARRIVES.

Motherhood should cause you no fear or trouble. As soon as you know a baby is coming, tell your physician and field matron about it. They will tell you what you must do to keep well.

If you have had one miscarriage another may be prevented by proper treatment. These accidents are often caused by lifting heavy things and by sudden jolts, etc. They are more dangerous than normal births.

If you are going to have a baby you must have plenty of sleep. Do not stay up late and dance all night. Keep the windows open while you sleep or, better still, sleep out of doors when the weather will permit. Take frequent baths. It is better for you and will be better for the baby.

Keep your breasts clean and soften them with a little vaseline each day. If you do this they will not be so apt to get sore.

Drink plenty of water and keep the bowels moving every day. Eat clean, well-cooked food. The baby must not be starved before it is born. Remember, however, that overeating is bad both for you and the baby. Do not drink beer or other alcoholic drinks or patent medicines.

### AFTER THE BABY IS BORN.

Have the baby's birth reported. For many reasons it is important that the birth of your child be legally recorded. Such a record may help you to prove some day that it is an American citizen. It will prove how old it is, and establish the right to vote, to marry, to make contracts, to establish claims to inheritance, etc. They all depend upon the filing of a correct birth record. The superintendent, physician, or field matron will attend to this for you, if you ask them.

If you love your baby, nurse it for the first 12 months. Ten babies nursed on the bottle among white people die to one nursed on the breast. The mother's milk is nature's food and is better for the baby than any other. It is always ready and is never sour. It does not have to be prepared or measured. It will make your baby strong, as it is free from germs and dirt.

Many Indian babies when very young are strapped by their mothers to boards and cradles.



A NAVAJO CRADLE.

This is not good for the baby as it restricts the baby's movements. How would you like to have your arms and legs tied up so you could not move them? It is natural for a baby to want to work its arms and legs, and we must not stop him from doing so.

## CLOTHING THE BABY.

*Fresh air.*—When Indian babies are very young it is not uncommon to see the Indian mothers cover the cradles entirely with a blanket. This shuts off the fresh air from the baby and does it

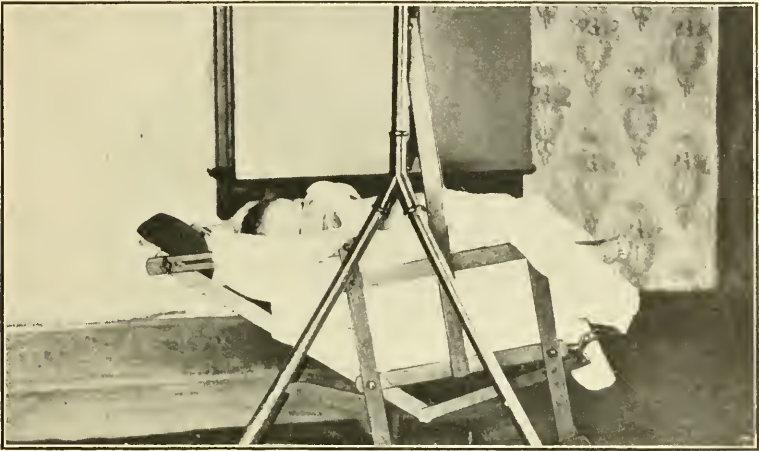


NORMAL BABY PROPERLY DRESSED.

harm. It renders the baby more likely to catch cold and makes it uncomfortably hot.

Later on when the baby learns to walk he is often allowed to run about naked. This is not good either. Babies must not be either smothered or frozen.

The baby is very sensitive to heat and cold. In hot weather mothers should not put too many clothes on the baby. When he gets



GIVE BABY PLENTY OF FRESH AIR.



LET BABY SLEEP OUT OF DOORS.

older, however, and goes out, he should have clothing enough to keep his body, legs, and feet warm and dry.

## SAVE THE BABIES.

JANUARY 10, 1916.

*To superintendents and other employces of the United States Indian Service:*

In an address before the Congress on Indian Progress held at San Francisco in August of last year I said:

It is our chief duty to protect the Indian's health and to save him from premature death. Before we educate him, before we conserve his property, we should save his life. If he is to be perpetuated, we must care for the children. We must stop the tendency of the Indian to diminish in number, and restore a condition that will insure his increase. Every Indian hospital bed not necessarily occupied with those suffering from disease or injury should be available for the mother in childbirth. It is of first importance that we begin by reestablishing the health and constitution of Indian children. Education and protection of property are highly important, but everything is secondary to the basic condition which makes for the perpetuation of the race.

That thought has deepened its hold upon my convictions.

We must guarantee to the Indian the first of inalienable rights—the right to live. No race was ever created for utter extinction. The chief concern of all ethics and all science and all philosophies is life.

The Indian has demonstrated his humanity and his capacity for intellectual and moral progress amid conditions not always propitious, and I am eager to participate with all the favoring forces that contribute to his racial triumph, believing as I do that when he comes to himself as a factor in the modern world his achievements will enrich and brighten the civilization of his native land.

I should like to get the feeling I have upon this question into the conscience and aspirations of every Indian Service employee until there shall prevail a sort of righteous passion to see that every Indian child has a fair chance to live.

There is something fundamental here.

We can not solve the Indian problem without Indians. We can not educate their children unless they are kept alive.

All our Indian schools, reservations, individual allotments, and accumulated incomes tend pathetically toward a wasted altruism if maintained and conserved for a withering, decadent people.

If we have an Indian policy worthy of the name, its goal must be an enduring and sturdy race, true to the noblest of its original instincts and virtues and loyally sympathetic with our social and national life; a body of efficient citizens blending their unique powers and powers with the keen and sleepless vigor of the white man.

We must, therefore, renew daily our warfare against the arch foe of efficiency—disease.

We must begin at the right place—not only with the infant at its mother's breast but with the unborn generation.

The new campaign for health in which I would enlist you is first of all to save the babies!

Statistics startle us with the fact that approximately three-fifths of the Indian infants die before the age of 5 years.

Of what use to this mournful mortality are our splendidly equipped schools?

I earnestly call upon every Indian Bureau employee to help reduce this frightful percentage! Superintendents, teachers, physicians, matrons, nurses, everyone can do something by instruction or example, the physician with his science, the nurse with her trained skill, the matron with her motherly solicitude, all of us by personal hygiene, cleanliness, and sobriety.

With this idea uppermost, all employees whose duties bring them in touch with Indian families must work in closest harmony for surrounding the expectant Indian mother with favorable health conditions before and after childbirth. The sanitation of the homes of such women should have special attention, and no baby allowed to be born into an environment germinating disease if prevention is available.

The simplest rules of motherhood applied under intelligent and friendly direction would save most of the Indian babies who annually fill untimely graves.

I want to send this safety, as far as possible, into every home of an Indian mother, whether that home be a tepee, a tent, a log house with dirt floors, or a more comfortable abode.

This means work, hard work, but the reward will be living souls.

I shall expect each superintendent to acquaint himself with the home conditions of every Indian family on the reservation and to adopt practical and effective means for quick and certain improvement.

Superintendents must organize such a system of cooperative information through their employees as will enable them to do this, exercising, of course, great care and discretion in gathering the requisite information.

I shall consider, on the superintendent's recommendation, a reasonable use of individual Indian moneys for the improvement of insanitary homes, where the family has such funds. In the absence of such moneys, every effort must be made to secure clean and wholesome conditions through the efforts of the adult members of the family. If there are no members physically able to labor, expenditure may be recommended from the funds "Relieving distress and prevention, etc., of disease among Indians."

The crux of the matter is this: We must, if possible, get rid of the intolerable conditions that infest some of the Indian homes on the reservation, creating an atmosphere of death instead of life.

It will be the duty of the field matron to learn of conditions existing in Indian homes and of cases requiring medical attention and report them to the superintendent. It will be her duty to see that the prospective mother knows what equipment is necessary for the proper care of her new-born babe, and the importance of the provision which the husband should make for the health and comfort of the mother and child should be early and urgently impressed upon him.

Physicians must be promptly advised of all cases of prospective motherhood and they must see that proper attention is given before and after that event, arranging, if practicable, for hospital facilities where the home surroundings are unfavorable. Special effort should be made to see that the mother has nourishing food before and following childbirth.

I am advised that the death rate among Indian babies is most excessive after the nursing period when, through ignorance or carelessness, they are given improper food, such as green fruits, melons, or corn, made further harmful, perhaps, by the presence of flies, and from the use of which intestinal disorders are almost sure to follow.

There should be vigilant and unrelenting effort to impress upon parents the great importance of supplying food which will furnish proper nourishment for the growing child. There should be constant endeavor to educate parents to an understanding of the value of a sufficient supply of cow's or goat's milk, or condensed milk, pure water, and suitable solid food, and to the necessity of maintaining cleanliness of person, cooking utensils, and other articles of domestic use.

It would be worth while, it would be great, if we could lift the Indian out of his uninformed condition and induce him to see that the natural and beautiful love he has for his children will not keep them alive and well and joyous unless supplemented by a rational use of food, clothing, fresh air, and pure water.

If Government aid is necessary to bring health out of disease and squalor, it should not be withheld, but good results if obtained will scarcely continue unless the Indian parents exchange indolence for industry and are awakened to the use and beauty of personal and environing cleanliness.

This campaign for better babies, for the rescue of a race, calls for redoubled energy and zeal throughout the service, for it means personal work and tireless patience. It is a well-nigh stupendous task, but will be a glorious one if we can make successful headway.

I believe that the high aspirations and missionary spirit generally prevailing among our field employees are a guaranty of substantial and lasting achievements, and I hope and believe we shall have the quickened cooperation of all denominational agencies, religious missionaries, and mission schools having special interest in the Indian's spiritual welfare and whose priceless labors, luminant with self-sacrifice and religious fervor, have done so much for the red man. We shall all, I am sure, exert an irresistible union of effort.

The educational propaganda against disease must, of course, be steadily increased and strengthened. Our Indian schools, where so many of the rising generations are assembled, are well organized and should be a mighty instrumentality for health and higher ideals of life. In their education of girls I hope to see added emphasis given to such subjects as home nursing, child welfare and motherhood, the sanitation, arrangement, and management of the home, and that nothing reasonable shall be spared to fit every Indian girl for intelligent housekeeping and for attractive home making.



There is among the Indians a marked and tender affection for their children, but too often the wife, the mother, is regarded and treated as the burden bearer. I wish we might see this habit overcome, for it is distinctly barbaric. I want to see developed and prevalent in every Indian school from the least to the largest that modern and truly chivalrous spirit that recognizes and respects the sacredness of womanhood. I should like to have every Indian boy leave school with this lofty and just sentiment fused into his character, as the picture in the porcelain, because of the deep and exquisite power it will have to bless his future home with health and happiness.

While, therefore, this appeal aims primarily at the safety and health of the child and is intended to enforce the thought that the future of the Indian race may depend vitally upon what we shall be able to accomplish for its new generation, it is also a message of reinforcement to every utterance and every effort expressed or put forth within the Indian Service in behalf of the adult against tuberculosis, trachoma, and every other disease; against the liquor curse and the use of any kind of enervating drug or dope. I look to the schools chiefly to safeguard the boys and girls enrolled there against these deadly scourges, and there must be no abatement but rather renewed and continuing energies in this direction.

In closing, I ask every employee to do his or her part in widening our work against disease until our Indian reservations become the home of healthy, happy, bright-eyed children with a fair start in life, and our schools become impregnable defenses against every enemy to healthy and high-minded boys and girls.

Sincerely, yours,

CATO SELLS, *Commissioner.*



HEALTHY INDIAN BABY.

