

So You're Going to Have a Baby

By C. H. Schwenger, M.D.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *When the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario planned their campaign to reduce infant and maternal mortality, they stressed the importance of education in pre-natal care for mothers. So when we saw this article in The Shelburne Free Press and Economist, written by Dr. Schwenger of the Dufferin County Health Unit, we thought: here is a piece of down-to-earth advice just right to pass on to our women through their Institute paper.*

HAVING A baby should be a rich experience for both parents. With knowledge and understanding, mothers find this period one of serenity and confidence; and to fathers the prospect of establishing a family is a proud and happy one.

The so-called dangers of childbirth are not nearly so great as they were only a few short years ago. Physicians and nurses today are well trained and have a much better knowledge and understanding of childbirth. Newer drugs are available which help to conquer complications should they occur. Hospitals have better facilities to handle confinement cases than ever before.

In spite of all these advances, certain precautions must be taken before the baby is born in order to protect both the mother and the unborn child. There are still too many mothers and far too many infants who die unnecessarily because of inadequate prenatal care.

Let Your Doctor Do His Part

As an expectant mother, you need early and frequent medical supervision to help you have a safe and comfortable pregnancy and a healthy baby. You should visit your doctor regularly once a month from the second to the seventh month and then oftener until the baby's birth. The doctor is the expert. Let him take his share of the responsibility for your health and your baby's.

The doctor will take a careful history of your past health and will examine you to determine that you are well and able to carry out this important project. You will be weighed, your blood pressure will be taken, your heart and lungs checked and your pelvic bones examined to determine their size. He will also do an internal examination. But all this may not happen on the first visit. In addition, he will do blood tests, such as for anemia and the Rh factor, and will examine a sample of urine at each visit. With the information, and that obtained at later examinations, the doctor will be able to give you the best advice and care throughout your pregnancy.

If any unusual conditions, such as bleeding, pain, severe headaches, dizziness, swelling of the face, hands or feet, or sudden weight gain, occur be-

tween your regular visits to the doctor, they should be reported to him right away.

Dental work is important, too. If extensive dental work needs to be done, you should first check with your doctor.

What You Can Do

Wise parents should spend the months before the baby is born finding out what is going on, what signs to watch for and how to care for the coming baby. The Health Unit has good sources of information available for expectant parents. Also recommended is Doctor Spock's book, "Baby and Child Care," available in a pocket book edition.

During pregnancy you should lead a normal and healthful life, giving special consideration to your nutrition, rest and exercise, and recreation.

The nutrition of the expectant mother has an important influence on her baby's health as well as on her own, and helps to prepare her for nursing. Excessive weight gain must be avoided and extra milk and vitamin D should be provided in addition to the recommendations in Canada's Food Rules.

Expectant mothers need to avoid getting overtired, so a balance between rest and exercise is important. Eight hours sleep with planned rest periods during the morning and afternoon for at least an hour a day will prevent fatigue. Housework and walking provide exercise, but unusual strains and activities which may result in falls or accidents should be avoided.

Planned recreation with husband and wife sharing the enjoyment of outside activities provides a sound basis for family living. Activities or interests in the community, such as walks in the fresh air, attending spectator sports, going to shows or concerts, are all part of companionship so essential to happy family living.

Canada's Infant Mortality

There has been a great deal of publicity about the fact that Canada, in spite of its high standard of living, ranks in 11th place among the countries of the world with an infant mortality rate (number of deaths under one year of age per 1,000 live births) of 31. Sweden, in first place, has a rate of only 17.

What accounts for the consistently lower rates in Sweden, New Zealand, Holland, Australia, Denmark, England, Wales, Switzerland, the United States, Finland and Scotland? One common factor appears—the mothers look after themselves better during their pregnancy. They go to their doctor early in pregnancy and then regularly up to the time of confinement.