VAGINAL IRRIGATIONS

Vaginal irrigation, or douching, may be employed for simple cleansing purposes, as in leucorrhea or in preparation for operative procedures, for the purpose of bringing soothing, astringent, or antiseptic solutions in contact with diseased vaginal or cervical mucous membrane, and as a means of applying heat to the pelvic organs to relieve congestion or inflammation, to hasten involution after labor, to control uterine hemorrhage, etc. In pregnancy and during menstruation douches should be used with caution.

Apparatus.—There will be required a large glass irrigating jar or douche bag, a bath thermometer, 6 feet (180 cm.) of rubber tubing, 1/4 inch (6. mm.) in diameter, leading from the reservoir to the douche nozzle, a glass vaginal douche nozzle, and a douche pan with a spout to which is attached a piece of rubber tubing sufficiently long to convey the waste fluid to a slop pail (Fig. 804).

The douche nozzle should preferably be of glass *without any curve* and *having perforations on the sides* but *with none at the end* (Fig. 805).

With such an instrument there is little danger of the solution entering the uterus in cases of a patulous cervix.

Asepsis.—The greatest care should be taken against infection especially in puerperal cases. The apparatus should, therefore, be boiled for five minutes in plain water and the thermometer should be

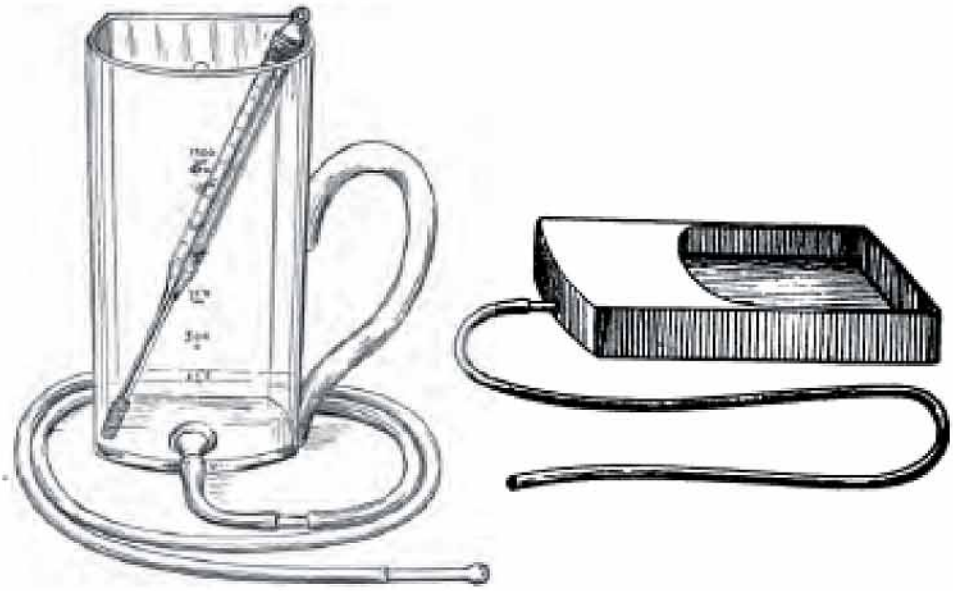

FIG. 804.—Apparatus for vaginal douching.

sterilized by immersion in a 1 to 500 bichlorid of mercury solution, after which it is rinsed in sterile water. The attendant's hands should be cleansed in the usual way and the external genitals should be washed with soap and water followed by a 1 to 2000 bichlorid solution. When the patient administers the douches herself, the dangers of

FIG. 805.—Enlarged view of a glass vaginal douche nozzle.

infection and the proper means of avoiding it should be carefully explained to her.

Solutions Used.—Among the many solutions used for vaginal injection are the following: Plain sterile water; normal salt solution—salt ℥i (4 gm.) to the pint (500 c.c.) of boiled water—boric acid, 2 per cent.; thymol 1 to 1000; lysol 1 per cent.; creolin 1 per cent.; tannic acid ℥i (4 gm.) to the quart (liter); alum acetate ℥i (4 gm.) to the quart (liter); permanganate of potash 1 to 2000;

bichlorid of mercury 1 to 5000; carbolic acid 1 per cent., etc. *The use of poisonous drugs, such as the latter two, should be followed by a douche of sterile water or saline to avoid any danger of absorption.*

Temperature.—Ordinarily the irrigation is given at a temperature of 100° to 105° F. (38° to 41° C.). When the stimulating and vascular constricting effect of heat is desired, however, the temperature should be from 115° to 120° F. (46° to 49° C.).

Quantity.—At least 1 gallon (4 liters) of solution should be used at a time. If it is desired to obtain a prolonged effect from the heat,

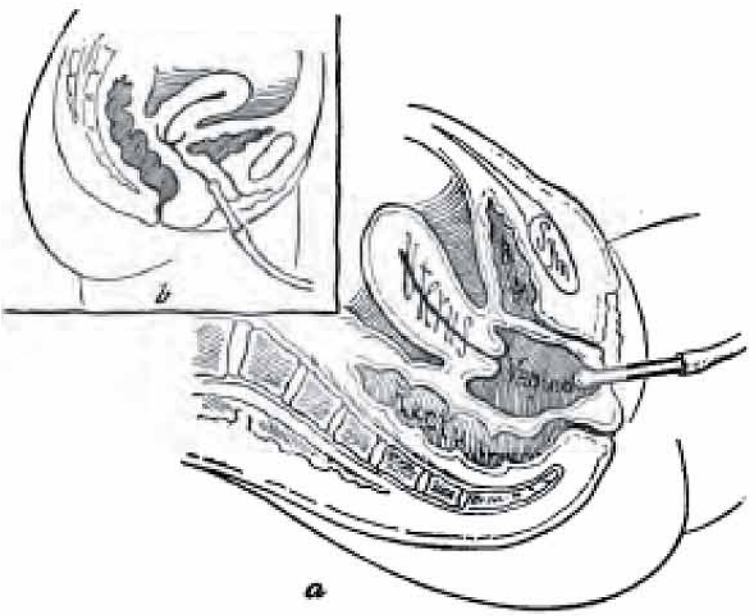

FIG. 806.—Showing the correct (*a*) and the incorrect (*b*) method of giving a vaginal douche. (Ashton.)

several gallons may be used over a period of fifteen to thirty minutes.

Height of Elevation.—This is important, since, if the reservoir is elevated too high, the pressure will be so great that solution may be forced into the uterus. An elevation of 2 to 3 feet (60 to 90 cm.) is amply sufficient.

Frequency.—This will depend upon the purposes of the douche from once a day to three or more times daily.

Position of Patient.—The patient lies in bed on a douche pan in the dorsal position, with the knees flexed, or else recumbent in a bath tub. *The douche should not be taken with the patient sitting on the toilet.*

Technic.—The labia are widely separated with the fingers of the left hand and with the right hand the nozzle is introduced into the vagina, first, however, allowing the solution to flow in order to expel

any air or cold fluid. The desired amount of solution is then permitted to enter the vagina which balloons up under the influence of the distention and thus allows the solution to come in contact with its entire surface (Fig. 806).

In cases of a relaxed vagina, it is necessary to compress the vaginal outlet about the douche tube in order to obtain this distention. This procedure should, however, be used with caution in puerperal cases, for, if the intravaginal pressure be too great, some of the solution will necessarily be forced into the uterus. During the irrigation care must be taken to protect the patient's body from cold by suitable covering.