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Carmines Dye and Salmonellosis

Sirs,

This note is prompted by the article 'Carmines as an Index of Transit Time in Children with Simple Constipation' by S. B. Dimson in *Archives*, **45**, page 232. Carmines dye is very convenient for the purpose mentioned, and has been widely used also to colour certain foods, drugs, and cosmetics. However, it should be pointed out that hospital outbreaks of salmonellosis (*S. cubana*) have been traced to contaminated batches of this naturally derived dye. The dye is made from cochineal powder which is derived from ground-up dried insects and larvae (*Dactylopius coccus costa*).

Many interesting details concerning the history and uses of carmines dye have recently appeared (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Office of Vital Statistics, 1966; Lang *et al.*, 1967; Komarmy, Oxley, and Brecher, 1967). It appears that most processed batches of carmines are relatively safe for oral use. Newly received supplies should be cultured

before use. Alternatively, synthetic brilliant blue (Lutwak and Burton, 1964) may be employed.

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