

Revision activities

Learn the information in this booklet then close it and test yourself with these:

1. Describe three differences between medieval life and Roman life.
2. Name five explanations of disease used by medieval people.
3. Describe the difference between **pneumonic** and **bubonic** plague.
4. Describe three public health dangers in medieval towns.
5. Explain two reasons why public health got worse in the Middle Ages.
5. Give two reasons why medieval surgeons had a bad reputation.
6. Explain two ways in which the Christian Church made it harder for medicine to develop and improve.
7. Name three Greek/Roman ideas that the Christian Church used during the Middle Ages.
8. Describe what cauterization was.
9. Explain why surgeons cauterized.
10. Say how cauterization was different to Roman/Greek wound care.
11. **Make a mnemonic for CHURCH. In it, record the ways that the Church held medicine back.**

Exam questions

Describe questions – 5 marks each

1. Describe the work of surgeons in the Middle Ages.
2. Describe the main treatments used by doctors in the Middle Ages.
3. Why was the Black Death able to spread so quickly in 14th Century England?

Explain questions – 7 marks each

1. Explain why bloodletting was used in the Middle Ages.

Judgement questions – 8 marks each

You will need to look back at your revision on Ancient Greece to do these!!

1. Why did the Ancient Greeks make more progress in medicine than people in the Middle Ages?
2. How far were Greek ideas about medicine accepted in the Middle Ages?

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History Department

Medieval medicine AD1000 – AD1450

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Medieval life

The key features of life in the Middle Ages were:

- **War** – the Roman empire was replaced by different kingdoms, often at war.
- **Religion** – The Christian Church became very powerful.
- **Poor communication** – The Roman roads were destroyed, making it harder for medical ideas to spread.
- **Less trade & wealth** – Trade was disrupted by war. People and kingdoms had less money to spend on improving medicine.

Medieval ideas about disease

- **God & the Devil** – Disease was a punishment from God for sin.
- **Movement of planets** – position of the moon and planets could cause sickness.
- **Bad smells caused by dirt** - They thought there was a link between dirty conditions and disease
- **Invisible poisons** – could be spread through the air by looking at someone else.
- **Four Humours Theory**

Black Death

- Arrived in 1348. Regular outbreaks through the Middle Ages.
- **Bubonic Plague** was spread by fleas living on rats. It caused rashes, fever, swellings (buboes) and death.
- **Pneumonic Plague** was spread in the air. It caused coughing, fever and death.

Medieval public health

- At the start of the Middle Ages, public health became worse because:
 - The Roman public health systems were destroyed in war
 - Medieval rulers spent their money on weapons instead of medical improvements.
- Medieval towns were dirty. The main problems were:
 - **Open sewers** to take waste away
 - **Cesspits** (pits in the ground to collect waste)
 - **Human and animal waste** dumped into the streets and rivers
- By the end of the Middle Ages, some rulers made laws to clean up the towns. This was because they had made a link between dirty conditions and Black Death.

The Christian Church helped medicine because:

Role of the Church

- It spread Galen & Hippocrates's work including their ideas about **natural treatments, observation & recording** and **four humours theory**.
- It set up **monasteries** with fresh water systems, though these were only for use by monks, not everybody.
- It set up **hospitals** (infirmaries) where the elderly and tired could rest.
- It set up **medical schools** to train doctors.

However the Christian Church held medicine back because:

- It stopped criticism of Galen's work, so his mistakes were not uncovered.
- All books were handwritten by monks, who repeated the Church's teaching.
- It taught people that diseases were a punishment from God. This stopped people looking for the true cause of disease.
- It taught people to use religious cures. E.g. When the Black Death struck, **flagellants** whipped themselves in the streets to show God they were sorry and persuade him to take the plague away.
- It stopped **dissection**. Dissection now happened rarely and was only used to show that Galen's work was correct, not to challenge it.

Medieval treatments

Medieval doctors were trained by the Church. They had to be men and used:

- **Purging & bleeding** – to balance the humours, based on Four Humours theory.
- **Herbal remedies** – e.g. Poppy and hemlock
- **Natural remedies** – e.g. Onion, garlic and wine
- **Leeches** – to remove blood

Surgery

- Surgeons required no qualifications. Even women could be surgeons.
- Although some barber surgeons had experience and skill, most had a poor reputation.
- Many patients died of infection, pain and blood loss.
- So most surgery was basic e.g. **amputation** and **tooth pulling**.
- **Cauterization** – Instead of cleaning wounds like the Greeks & Romans, medieval surgeons used hot oil or a hot iron to seal wounds and stop infection. This was painful and made infection worse. But medieval surgeons thought the pus which it produced was a sign of healing.