

# Medicine

For centuries, the Greeks believed that gods and goddesses controlled natural events, including health and sickness. In fact, the earliest Greeks thought that illnesses and accidents were punishments sent by the gods. Ancient Greeks didn't know about the natural causes of disease and healing.

A Greek man named Hippocrates (hīh-POK-ruh-teez) changed the way people thought about health and medicine. Hippocrates is often called the "father of medicine." He brought a scientific way of thinking to his work as a doctor. Hippocrates believed that diseases had natural causes. He taught his students to carefully observe their patients and write down what they saw.

Even more important, Hippocrates established principles of medicine that are still followed. Today, people who become doctors take the Hippocratic Oath, based on these ideas of ethical behavior. Doctors promise to be honest, to preserve life, and to keep information about their patients private.

The Greeks loved to participate in and watch competitions in sports. Their interest in athletics gave them some knowledge about how the human body moves. But their understanding of the body was limited, partly because it was forbidden to look inside the body to see how it worked. The early Greeks believed that cutting open a human body offended the gods. As these beliefs changed over time, the Greeks made new discoveries.

Several centuries after Hippocrates, Greek **medical [medical: relating to the practice and treatment of medicine]** students were able to name and describe organs inside the body. They discovered that the heart was a pump that sent blood flowing throughout the body. They also learned that the brain was the center of the nervous system.