



A Brief History of Medicine: From Hippocrates' Four Humours to Crick and Watson's Double Helix

By Paul Strathern

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The foundations for the scientific study of the body and modern Western medicine as we know it started with William Harvey's discovery of the circulatory system in the early 17th century. But its roots stretch back as far as ancient Greece, when medicine first departed from the divine and the mystical and moved toward observation and logic. Its early development was slow, constrained by the taboo around dissection (only external symptoms could be used for diagnosis), as well as superstition and mysticism (illness was the work of demons and pixies and curable only by penitence). Paul Strathern steers us skillfully through the maze of discoveries, diseases, and wrong turns that have made medicine what it is today—super efficient, high tech, and increasingly costly. A Brief History of Medicine offers an accessible history of the arguments, missteps, and dumb luck that led to the world's most important medical breakthroughs—from anatomy, grave robbing, the plague, and germ theory to vaccination, quackery, microorganisms, and penicillin.

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