

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Tuberculosis in America: The Discovery That Germs Cause Disease

Essential Question

How did the emergence of modern science and technology during the Progressive Era impact the understanding of disease and public health?

Before you watch

Work with a partner to answer this question.

- Most families set up routines to try to teach children how to stay healthy. List two things you regularly do to avoid getting sick and explain why you think it works.

To avoid getting sick I...	This is effective because...
1.	
2.	

Vocabulary

Review these vocabulary words and their definitions before watching the video

- **tuberculosis (TB)**—an infectious disease that primarily affects the lungs
- **germ**—a really tiny living organism (microorganism) that can cause disease
- **bacteria**—a type of microorganism; some bacteria cause disease
- **tubercle bacillus**—a type of bacteria which causes tuberculosis
- **contagion**—the process by which disease is spread by close contact; a contagious disease can be transmitted from one person to another
- **inherit**—to have something because of the genetic transmission from parent to offspring; some diseases, such as sickle cell anemia, can be inherited
- **isolate**—to separate something to be alone or apart from other things

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While You Watch

Fill in the blanks. Watch the video more than once and consult the [transcript](#), as needed.

1. By the beginning of the 19th century, the disease had killed _____ of all people whom had ever lived.
2. Physicians of the day believed that "consumption" was _____.
3. When scientist Robert Koch injected the *tubercle bacillus* bacteria into a healthy animal, it _____.
4. If a person with tuberculosis coughed, someone else nearby could inhale the air-borne _____ where it _____.
5. The term "consumption" was dropped in favor of the name that linked it to the bacteria— _____.

After You Watch

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why did the name "tuberculosis" replace the name "consumption" for this disease?
2. How did Koch's theory gain acceptance among the medical community?
3. How did Koch's discovery affect the understanding of disease and how it is spread?
4. How do you think attitudes toward life and death, as well as disease, may have changed as a result?
5. What impact does this work have on our lives today?
6. What are some other medical or scientific practices that have changed over time because of new discoveries?
7. Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Ounce of Prevention poster](#). Would you follow these suggestions if you didn't know about the germ theory of disease? Why or why not?
 - **Clean Your Hands Often:** Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses.
 - **Avoid Contact with Wild Animals:** Wild animals can carry deadly diseases and pass them to you and your pets. Keep your house free of wild animals by not leaving any food around. Keep garbage cans sealed.