

# Modern Medicine vs Victorian Remedies

The Victorian era was an age of inventions and discoveries. Many scientific breakthroughs date from the Victorian times. Famous biologists, such as Louis Pasteur and John Snow, developed theories of germs and how illnesses spread. John Snow was able to trace an outbreak of cholera, a disease that causes diarrhoea and can lead to death from dehydration, to a pump in London where people got their drinking water from.


In hospitals, Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole put this knowledge about germs into practice, using it to successfully treat patients. Florence Nightingale shared her knowledge through a training school at St Thomas' Hospital.

However, this modern medicine, based on science, would not become the norm until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this activity, you will explore Victorian remedies that were sold in pharmacies or used in the home to treat different illnesses and conditions. You will then compare them to the treatments used in modern medicine.


Read the column entitled 'Illness or Complaint'. Then, decide which Victorian remedy could be used and what the modern-day treatment would be. You can then write the corresponding number and letter in the table below.



## Modern Medicine vs Victorian Remedies

Illness or Complaint	Victorian Remedy	Modern Treatment
<b>anaemia</b> low number of red blood cells which results in being very pale and weak	1 laxatives, such as castor oil (these make you go to the toilet)	A hold your breath or drink water
<b>chickenpox</b>	2 applying a potato on the ear	B painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen
<b>tapeworm</b> a parasite that infects your intestines, causing abdominal pain and weight loss	3 arsenic (a poison) inhaled as vapour, ingested or injected	C taking iron supplements and treating the underlying cause of the iron deficiency
<b>earache</b>	4 placing bacon or milk near either end of the digestive system (top or bottom) to attract the parasite out	D laxatives (medicines that stimulate your intestines) or fibre supplements that add bulk to your stool
<b>constipation</b>	5 strychnine – a powerful poison that causes convulsions (extreme shaking)	E vaccination to prevent it, paracetamol to ease pain and cooling creams or gels for the rash
<b>hiccups</b>	6 inhaling chloroform, which makes you sleepy but also damages the nervous system, liver and kidneys	F prescription tablets containing a drug which is toxic to the parasite
<b>asthma</b>	 7 bloodletting – using leeches to suck blood from a patient, removing 'bad blood'	G inhalers which contain medicine to help you breathe better

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Illness or Complaint	Victorian Remedy	Modern Treatment
<b>nausea</b> feeling sick	8 inhaling smoke 	H doctors would do a physical exam, review baby's history and symptoms and recommend diet or routine changes
<b>insomnia</b> not being able to sleep	9 belladonna (a poisonous plant especially harmful to children)	I sleep routine, relaxation, regular exercise, prescription sleeping pills
<b>colic</b> severe stomach pain in babies	10 cold showers	J tablets or syrups called anti-emetics, which treat nausea and vomiting

Illness or Complaint	Victorian Remedy	Modern Treatment
anaemia		
chickenpox		
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insomnia		
colic		

# Modern Medicine vs Victorian Remedies - **Answers**

<b>Illness or Complaint</b>	<b>Victorian Remedy</b>	<b>Modern Treatment</b>
anaemia	3	C
chickenpox	1	E
tapeworm	4	F
earache	2	B
constipation	5	D
hiccups	6	A
asthma	8	G
nausea	7	J
insomnia	10	I
colic	9	H