

Health and the Human Body in American History

American History · Answer Key · 19 Questions

1. During the 1918 influenza pandemic, what unusual and severe dermatological symptom was frequently observed, particularly in younger adults, causing concern among physicians?

A) Petechiae and ecchymoses

- B) Erythema nodosum
- C) Vitiligo
- D) Acne fulminans

2. Before the widespread adoption of germ theory, what was a primary belief regarding the cause of diseases like malaria and yellow fever, significantly influencing early public health interventions?

A) Miasma or 'bad air'

- B) Imbalance of humors
- C) Divine punishment
- D) Cosmic alignments

3. The introduction of what common domesticated animal to the Americas by European colonists led to significant zoonotic disease transmission, including smallpox, measles, and influenza, to Indigenous populations who had no prior immunity?

A) Cattle

- B) Pigs
- C) Horses
- D) Chickens

4. What was a prominent, often fatal, nutritional deficiency disease prevalent among early American settlers due to limited dietary variety and reliance on preserved foods, characterized by symptoms like scurvy?

A) Vitamin C deficiency

- B) Vitamin D deficiency
- C) Iron deficiency anemia
- D) Thiamine deficiency

5. During the antebellum South, what parasitic infection, often contracted through contaminated water or soil, was widespread and significantly impacted the health and productivity of enslaved and free populations?

A) Hookworm

- B) Malaria
- C) Tuberculosis
- D) Cholera

6. The development of what vaccine in the late 18th century by Edward Jenner, although not directly in America, had a profound and immediate impact on disease prevention within American colonies and later the United States?

A) Smallpox vaccine

- B) Polio vaccine
- C) Rabies vaccine
- D) Diphtheria vaccine

7. What early American surgical innovation, pioneered by figures like Ephraim McDowell, involved the removal of what internal organ, marking a significant advancement in abdominal surgery?

A) Ovaries

- B) Appendix
- C) Gallbladder
- D) Kidney

8. The high mortality rates during the American Civil War were exacerbated by unsanitary battlefield conditions and primitive surgical practices, leading to widespread infections. What common bacterial infection was a leading cause of death post-amputation?

A) Gangrene

- B) Tetanus
- C) Sepsis
- D) Pneumonia

9. What was a primary medical concern for westward expansion travelers on routes like the Oregon Trail, often stemming from inadequate sanitation and contaminated water sources?

A) Dysentery

- B) Altitude sickness
- C) Frostbite
- D) Snakebite

10. The discovery and synthesis of what crucial class of drugs in the early 20th century revolutionized the treatment of bacterial infections, drastically reducing mortality rates from previously untreatable diseases like pneumonia and syphilis?

A) Antibiotics

- B) Antivirals
- C) Antihistamines
- D) Anesthetics

11. Before the widespread availability of refrigeration, what preservation technique was commonly used for meats and dairy, but also posed a significant risk for transmitting foodborne pathogens like *Clostridium botulinum*?

A) Salting

- B) Smoking
- C) Pickling
- D) Drying

12. What significant public health challenge emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in rapidly industrializing cities, primarily affecting children and linked to contaminated milk supplies?

A) Tuberculosis (specifically bovine)

- B) Lead poisoning
- C) Rickets
- D) Poliomyelitis

13. During the Gold Rush era, what common ailment, often caused by close-quarters living and poor hygiene in mining camps, led to widespread outbreaks and significant mortality?

A) Typhoid fever

- B) Malaria
- C) Dengue fever
- D) Yellow fever

14. The popularization of what beverage in the 19th century, particularly among working-class populations, led to significant public health concerns related to alcohol addiction and its associated physiological damage?

A) Whiskey

- B) Coffee
- C) Tea
- D) Sarsaparilla

15. What anatomical discovery, crucial for understanding circulation and blood flow, was detailed by William Harvey in the 17th century and had a foundational impact on American medical education and practice?

A) Circulation of blood

- B) Function of the nervous system
- C) Structure of the digestive tract
- D) Mechanics of respiration

16. The widespread presence of what type of insect vector in the Southern United States historically contributed to the high incidence of diseases like malaria and yellow fever, impacting public health efforts for centuries?

A) Mosquito

- B) Tick
- C) Flea
- D) Louse

17. What early American surgical instrument, often made of wood or ivory and used for probing wounds, exemplifies the rudimentary tools available before the advent of modern sterile surgical practices?

A) Trocars

- B) Scalpels
- C) Forceps
- D) Screws

18. The 'Great Stink' in London in 1858, caused by untreated sewage, highlighted a global public health crisis. Similarly, early American cities struggled with sanitation. What disease was often directly linked to contaminated water supplies in overcrowded urban areas?

A) Cholera

- B) Diphtheria
- C) Scarlet fever
- D) Measles

19. The development of anesthesia in the mid-19th century, most famously demonstrated by William T.G. Morton, revolutionized surgery. What specific type of ether was initially used in these groundbreaking procedures?

A) Diethyl ether

- B) Chloroform
- C) Nitrous oxide
- D) Halothane