Public Health

- Noticed that bad smells, unclean drinking water, sewage, swamps and dirt made people become ill.
- They build aqueducts to carry clean water into cities.
- They also built public baths, toilets and sewers to remove waste.
- Ideas about public health spread around their huge empire.

Claudius Galen – He wrote 60 medical books!

- Galen was a Greek physician. Like Hippocrates, he believed that illness was caused by imbalances of the four humours. Just as Hippocrates did, he told doctors to observe patients carefully and record symptoms.
- He developed the idea of opposite humours for counter-balancing the body’s humours.
- Galen discovered that the brain, not the heart, controls the speech.
- He found that the arteries, as well as veins, carry blood through the body.
- Proved that animal’s anatomy is different from humans.

HOWEVER...

- Galen made mistakes because he had to use only animals.
- He said there were holes in the septum of the heart which would let blood pass from right to the left side.
- Galen also believed that the blood was consumed rather than circulated.

Beliefs and Treatments

- Romans were not as interested as the Greeks in developing theories about the causes of disease.
- Doctors recommended more exercise, changes in diet or prescribed herbal medicines as opposites.
- Doctors were too expensive for most people. The head of the family was expected to look after their household. They would use herbal remedies and common sense methods.

Surgery

- The most common surgical treatment was bleeding.
- Internal operations were still rare because they were too risky.
- There were amputations; trephining was used to relieve pain in the head.

Summary of Roman Medicine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Continuities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Good harvests, better houses, more food</td>
<td>Diseases could not be stopped from spreading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained doctors in the army and towns</td>
<td>Women treated most health problems, often</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wider range of herbal medicines</td>
<td>using herbal remedies and common sense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh water supplies, sewers and baths</td>
<td>The poor did not benefit from the new public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>health schemes</td>
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The Four Humours Theory

- Medieval doctors believed illness was caused by an imbalance of the four humours.
- The theory developed into a more complex system, based on the position of the stars.
- Although human dissection was carried out in medical schools, findings were interpreted as the theory of the four humours – although some later doctors began to challenge traditional understandings.

New Developments in Medieval Medicine

- More schools sprang up and human dissection was allowed. There were some doubts about classical texts.
- New techniques included diagnosis by urine sample. This is a good aid to diagnosis, which is done today!
- Doctors also believed the stars caused disease and relied on astrology when deciding on treatments.
- Trained doctors were very expensive. Medicine practised amongst the most was provided by monasteries and housewife-physicians, using traditional cures and their experience.

Supernatural Beliefs and Treatments

- The church believed that illness was a punishment for sins – they prayed to god if they became ill.
- Some believed that pilgrimages to holy shrines could cure illness.
- Doctors had superstitious beliefs, saying magical words when treating patients and consulting stars.

Developments in Surgery

- In the Middle Ages, there was great demand for surgeons because of warfare.
- Surgery was held in such low regard that major procedures were often left to untrained barber-surgeons.
- Wine was first used as an antiseptic.
- Surgical treatments were still simple, as major surgery was risky.

Public Health Measures

- Towns lacked the public health schemes of the Romans.
- People relied on cesspits and wells. Waste was frequently disposed of into the street.
- People found it healthier to drink beer, than to drink water.

The Black Death – 1348

- Spread by coughs and sneezes or by black rat flea bites – black rats were carried overseas by ships.
- Arrived in Britain in 1348. Its victims were struck down suddenly and most died.
- Symptoms included exhaustion, high temperatures, swellings and difficulty breathing.
- Ships were made to wait 40 days before landing – they were quarantined.

What did people think caused the plague and how did they treat it?

- Miasma – carried sweet smelling herbs, sat between two large fires.
- God – tried to appease god by praying, or becoming flagellants (whipping themselves as a punishment).
- Humours out of balance – use of opposites, purging, vomiting and blood letting.
- Poisoned water – blamed the Jews.