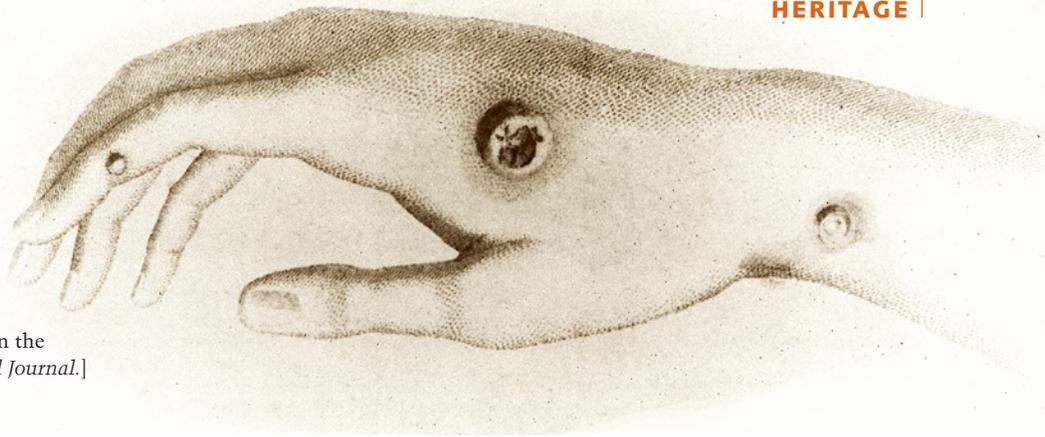


## 100 Years Ago: Vintage Editorial on Vaccination

[Editor's note: The following editorial appeared in the March 1921 edition of the *Rhode Island Medical Journal*.]



### Vaccination

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE WAS GIVEN A GREAT IMPETUS WHEN inoculation with pus taken from a smallpox pustule was introduced beneath the epidermis, as a protection against infection of smallpox.

The work of **Edward Jenner, MD**, of England, in 1798, first made known and showed the value of vaccination and from that time on vaccination was extensively used in all countries. He was at first ridiculed, but later allowed to practice in a hospital.



Painting of Edward Jenner (1749–1823), English rural physician, who performed the first vaccination against smallpox in 1796 on an eight-year-old boy named James Phipps. [WIKIMEDIA.ORG, CREATIVE COMMONS]

In a few years France and America recognized the value of this prevention from infection and adopted its use.

The old form of the vaccination was the “arm-to-arm” kind; the scab resulting from a vaccine vesicle of a healthy child was used. This could be readily procured and kept a long time. The humanized lymph is preferred by some. The lymph is taken from a true vesicle from the fifth to the seventh day of its development. Both above methods have their drawbacks inasmuch as infection of the vaccine and at times the source being from diseased persons.

The method of securing vaccine virus now is from farms where cows are kept in a healthy state, all precautions against disease being taken and the inoculation of smallpox into them,

with resulting vaccinia or cow-pox and lymph from typical vesicles put into sterile glass tubes or ivory points are dipped and dried. This virus must be kept cold and as fresh as possible and used within a few weeks.

All vaccination should be done under aseptic conditions. If the arm is the site chosen, it should be dressed by bandaging lightly so as to be easily removed for inspection and cleansing with a mild antiseptic solution or dry powder.

Vaccination can be done on infants a few weeks old, but unless smallpox is prevalent, better wait two to three years. Children of school age should be inoculated before going to school. Revaccination should be performed at puberty or at any time if smallpox is liable or has become epidemic.

Complications are rare and not serious as a rule. Some skin infections should cause one to defer vaccination until cured or improved.

No one should refuse if they understand the immunity given by vaccination.

It is common that certain parents of school children refuse vaccination, which, if they were permitted, and large numbers were not vaccinated, we would in time of epidemic find whole families wiped out of existence by this dreadful disease. Centuries ago China had its deadly experience of smallpox epidemics. Vaccination was its prevention.

A partial extract of our general laws, Chapter 65, Section 14: “No person shall be permitted to attend public school in this State without furnishing a certificate from some practicing physicians of being properly vaccinated as a protection from smallpox. The teacher to keep a record.

“Section 15. Fine of fifty dollars or imprisonment not exceeding thirty days for violation of this chapter.” ❖

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(Top of page) The hand Dr. Jenner used as a source for his vaccine from a book illustration of Jenner's as part of an inquiry into the causes and effects of the *variolae vaccinae* in 1798. [NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE]