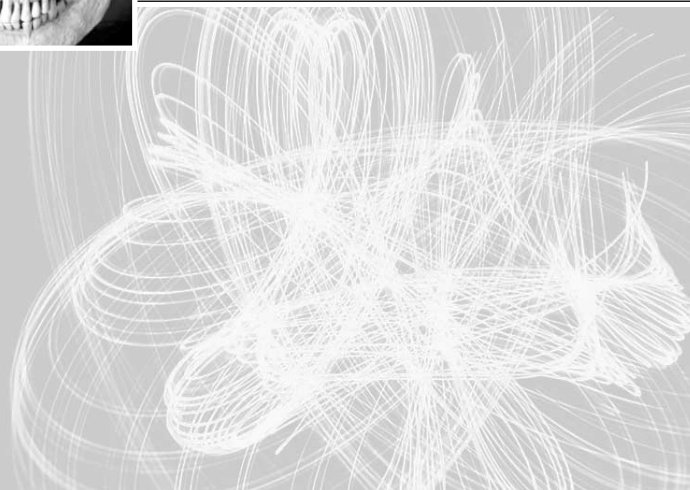
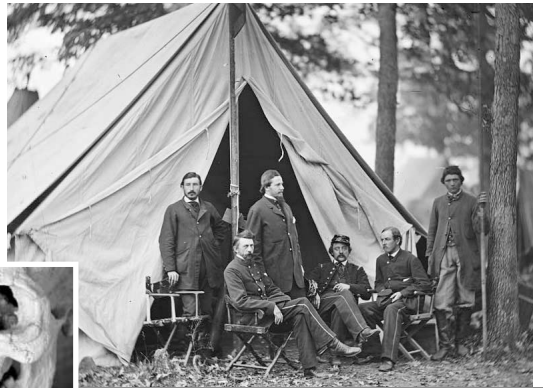


I ANATOMY & MEDICINE



1.1

Ancient Times: Native American Remedies



Native Americans used many wild plants to cure their illnesses.

Long before European-Americans brought their kind of medicine to North America, Native Americans were using various plants as remedies for medical problems ranging from coughs to bleeding.

To treat backaches, the Catawba people **steeped** roots of the gentian plant (known for its blue and purple flowers) in hot water and then put the liquid on their sore backs. Another Catawba remedy for back pain was to steep leaves of horsemint (a wild flower with pale purple blossoms) in water and then drink it.

Other remedies for pain included a drink made from wild black cherry plants. That was a remedy among the Cherokee people. Other Native Americans used tea made from cotton roots for the same purpose.

Respiratory illnesses like bronchitis^❶ had remedies, too, such as tea made from the leaves of the creosote bush. The Cree people used a drink made from tree bark to treat coughs. For influenza^❷, the Menominee Indians used tea made of tree bark too.

Diabetes^❸ has long been a concern among Native Americans. The Mohegan people thought a drink made from the flowers of wild carrots was good for diabetics.

For insect stings and bites, Native Americans had many remedies. In Minnesota, the Meskwaki people made flowers into a lotion and used it to treat bee stings. The Navajos used chewed stems of a certain plant for the same purpose. Another Native American remedy for bee stings was to apply chewed leaves of honeysuckle plants, which have white or yellow flowers.

Remedies to stop bleeding included a preparation of buckwheat and a drink made from certain berries. Native Americans even had an

❶ *Bronchitis* is a chronic lung condition that causes swelling of the bronchial tubes (part of the lungs). The main symptom is a severe and persistent cough.

❷ *Influenza* is commonly known by its shortened form, the flu.

❸ *Diabetes* is a disease in which sugar is not properly processed by the body. It is commonly treated by changes in diet, and injections of the drug insulin.

insect repellent. They pounded the root of one plant, mixed it with animal fat, and rubbed the mixture on their bodies to keep insects away.

In short, Native Americans had the same illnesses, aches and pains that we have today. But their remedies were very different from ours – so different, in fact, that Native Americans of long ago might not recognize our modern medicines as medicines at all!

- 🔊 **bronchitis** [brʌŋkái'tis]
- 🔊 **Catawba** [kə'tɔ:bə]
- 🔊 **creosote** [kri:'əsəut]
- 🔊 **Menominee** [mə'náməni:]
- 🔊 **Mohegan** [məʊ'hí:gən]

📖 WORDS FOR ANATOMY & MEDICINE

- ✓ apply
- ✓ diabetes
- ✓ influenza
- ✓ pound
- ✓ recognize
- ✓ remedy
- ✓ repellent
- ✓ respiratory
- ✓ sore
- ✓ steep

? Questions

- 01** What can you infer about Native Americans from this list of their remedies? Give one thing you can infer and explain how you can infer it.
- 02** Look at the word **steeped** in the passage. What do you think **steeped** means in this context?