

In 1796, a horrible disease broke out in England. It was called smallpox. Almost everyone who caught it died. In fact, smallpox had already killed millions of people around the world over many, many years. But 1796 was different. That year, an English doctor named Edward Jenner found a way to help save people from this disease.

Do You Know?

You may not jump for joy when you get a flu shot. That shot, though, is a vaccine. It can save your life. Between 1918 and 1919, a horrible disease called Spanish Flu killed millions of people around the world. Many of those who died were young people. There was no vaccine to fight the disease. Vaccines can save your life.



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There was a disease called cowpox that was like smallpox, but not as bad. People usually did not die from cowpox. Jenner saw that people who got well from cowpox didn't get sick with smallpox. He wondered if getting well from cowpox helped people fight off smallpox. Jenner had a plan to test his theory.

Jenner gave a farmer's 8-year-old son a shot of cowpox. The boy became



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Edward Jenner vaccinated his own son against smallpox.

sick but quickly got better. Then Jenner gave the boy a shot of smallpox. The boy did not become sick. Jenner's plan worked! Jenner called the cowpox shot a vaccine.

Jenner didn't know why his vaccine worked. Today, we know that the boy's immune system saved him. After getting the shot of cowpox, the boy's immune system made antibodies. It also made special white blood cells. These fought off the smallpox.

✓ Brain Check

- Describe how a vaccine works.
- Who developed vaccines?
- Why would you want a vaccine?