

Ignaz Semmelweis

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Ignaz Philip Semmelweis

The last known photograph taken of Ignaz Philip Semmelweis, in 1864, by Austrian photographer, [Ludwig Angerer](#), (1827–1879).

Born	<div><div></div><div>Semmelweis Ignác Fülöp</div></div> <div><div></div><div>1 July 1818</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Tabán, Buda, Kingdom of Hungary, Austrian Empire (modern-day Budapest, Central Hungary, Hungary)</div></div>
Died	<div><div></div><div>13 August 1865 (aged 47)^{[1]}</div></div> <div><div></div><div>In a Austrian psychiatric hospital in Oberdöling, Austrian Empire (modern-day Döling, Vienna, Vienna, Austria)</div></div>
Cause of death	<div>Gangerous wound caused by infection</div>
Education	<div>University of Vienna (began studying law there in the fall (or autumn) of 1837; graduated in 1844 and awarded with a doctor of medicine)</div>
Alma mater	<div>University of Vienna (began studying law there in the fall (or autumn) of 1837; graduated in 1844 and awarded with a doctor of medicine)</div>
Occupation(s)	<div>Physician and scientist</div>
Known for	<div>Introducing hand disinfection standards, antiseptic procedures, discovering the cause of postpartum infection, inventing the germ theory of disease</div>
Spouse	<div>Mária Weidenhofer (m. 1857; his death 1865)</div>
Children	<div>5 (3 died in infancy)</div>
Parents	<div>József Semmelweis, a prosperous grocer (born in 1778; died in 1846) (father)</div> <div>Theresia "Teréz" Müller (born in 1789; died in 1844) (mother)</div>

Ignaz Philip Semmelweis (born **Semmelweis Ignác Fülöp**; 1 July 1818 – 13 August 1865^[1]), was a [Hungarian physician](#) and [scientist](#), of [German](#)

descent and/or origin. He is known for his [antiseptic procedures](#), introducing hand disinfection standards to [clinics](#), discovering the cause of [postpartum infection](#), and discovering the best way to prevent the spread of [infections](#) in clinics among patients and even [medical staff](#), is by urging and requiring physicians and [healthcare medical workers](#) to [disinfect](#) and [sanitize](#) their hands, after helping a [patient](#) in a [medical center](#). Semmelweis had also [proposed hand washing](#) with [calcium hypochlorite](#), to [prevent](#) the [spread](#) of infections, in 1847.

He also did scientific observations and researches, on his studies, and wrote and published a book, *[Etiology, Concept and Prophylaxis of Childbed Fever](#)*, in 1861, based on his findings from his scientific observations, researches, and studies. Semmelweis was also the first person to invent the [germ theory of disease](#). But because the germ theory of disease had not been widely accepted, at the time, he had concluded that some disputed "cadaverous material" had caused postpartum infection. Despite his extensive research, Semmelweis' observations and ideas had been [rejected](#) and [criticized](#) by medical staff. He could offer very little theoretical explanation that the best way to prevent the spread of infections is through hand-washing, mainly due to the fact that [bacteria](#) had not yet been discovered and/or known, yet, at the time. Some physicians had even openly [humiliated](#), [mocked](#), and criticized Semmelweis, that they should wash their hands, to prevent the spread of infections, after helping a patient in a medical center. From his researches, studies, observations, and discoveries, Semmelweis was given very little credit for his work, and was often mocked and criticized, for his urging and requiring. Semmelweis would often write critical letters to the physicians that mocked, rejected, and criticized him for his work. Presumably, as a result, from the mocking and criticism, Semmelweis had fallen into [paranoia](#) and [mental illness](#). On 30 July 1865, Semmelweis was lured into being sent to a [psychiatric hospital](#), where he suffered extensive [beatings](#) and [torture](#), by the medical and psychiatric staff, there. Two (2) weeks after being admitted to the psychiatric hospital, he [died](#) in the psychiatric hospital, on 13 August, from a [gangerous wound](#) due to a infection on his right hand. The infection was presumably caused by the extensive beatings and torture he suffered^[1].

The medical [autopsy](#) carried out on his [carcass](#), gave the [cause of death](#) of Ignaz Philip Semmelweis as [pyemia](#) (a type of [sepsis](#) or blood poisoning.). His body was [buried](#) two (2) days later on 15 August, and his [funeral ceremony](#) was attended by very few people, (it has been [rumored](#) that not even his spouse (wife) or three (3) surviving children [attended](#) his funeral), and only a small number of [periodicals](#) had mentioned his death and created a [obituary](#) for him. His findings, observations, and studies, were accepted, only years after his death, when [Louis Pasteur](#) had confirmed the [germ theory of disease](#), giving Semmelweis' observations a thereotical explanation, and proved his findings as being accurate, and [Joseph Lister](#), acting on Paestur's resarch, had used Semmelweis's methods of preventing the spread of infection through hand-washing, proved to be a great success, and had drastically reduced the chances of infections at clinics. Semmelweis's methods, had become famous, and are used at many [medical centers](#), to help patients and prevent the spread of infections, today.

Biography

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Ignaz Philip Semmelweis was born originally as **Semmelweis Ignác Fülöp** on 1 July 1818, in [Tában, Buda, Kingdom of Hungary](#) (modern-day [Budapest, Central Hungary, Hungary](#)) to parents [József Semmelweis](#), a [prosperous grocer](#), and his spouse (wife), [Theresia "Teréz" Muller](#), as the fifth of ten children. József Semmelweis originally came from [Germany](#), but went to live in Hungary. As a child, Semmelweis recieved proper [education](#) from his family. He went to the [University of Vienna](#) to study [law](#) there in the fall (or [autumn](#)) of [1837](#), but quickly changed to [medicine](#), and graduated there in [1844](#) and awarded with a doctor of medicine. He would later become a [physician](#) and [scientist](#), known for his [antiseptic procedures](#), discovering the cause of [postpartum infection](#), introducing hand disinfection standards, and discovering the best way to prevent the spread of infections, in clinics, among patients and even medical staff, is by urging and requiring physicians to [wash their hands](#) after helping a patients. He also invented the [germ theory of disease](#). But because the germ theory of disease had not been widely accepted at the time, he concluded that some disputed "cadaverous material" caused postpartum infection. He did scientific observations and researches, on his studies, and wrote and published a book, *[Etiology, Concept, and Prophylaxis of Childbed Fever](#)*, based on his findings, in 1861. Despite his extensive research, Semmelweis' observations had been [rejected](#) and [criticized](#) by medical staff. He could offer very little theoretical explanation that the best way to prevent the spread of infections is through hand-washing, mainly due to the fact that [bacteria](#) had not been discovered and/or known, yet, at the time. Some physicians had even openly [humiliated](#) and [mocked](#) Semmelweis that they have to wash their hands, after helping a patient, in a clinic, to prevent the spread of infection. From all of his researches, observations, and studies, Semmelweis recieved very little credit for his work, and was often humiliated, mocked, rejected, and criticized, instead. Semmelweis had often wrote harsh critical letters to the physicians that humiliated and mocked him. He married [Mária Weidenhofer](#) in [1857](#), and they had five children together, of whom only three had survived and lived past [infancy](#). Presumably, as a result of being constantly humiliated, mocked, rejected, and criticized, and given very little credit for his work, Semmelweis had fallen into [paranoia](#) and [mental illness](#). On 30 July 1865, in [Oberdöling, Austrian Empire](#) (modern-day [Döling, Vienna, Vienna, Austria](#)) Semmelweis was lured into being sent to a [psychiatric hospital](#). In the psychiatric hospital, he was extensively beaten and tortured, by the psychiatric and medical staff, there. He [died](#) on 13 August 1865 (aged 47) in the psychiatric hospital, due to a [gangerous wound](#) on his right hand, which was caused by a [infection](#). In return, the infection was presumably caused by the extensive beating and torture he suffered. The medical autopsy carried out on his [carcass](#) gave the cause of death of Ignaz Philip Semmelweis as [pyemia](#) (a type of [sepsis](#) or blood poisoning.). Semmelweis was [buried](#) two (2) days later, with very few people attending his [funeral cemetery](#) (it has been rumored that not even his spouse (wife) and/or three (3) surviving children attended his funeral), and very few [periodicals](#) mentioning his death, at all, in the first place. His findings,

observations, and studies, were accepted, only years after his death and burial, when [Louis Pasteur](#), had confirmed the [germ theory of disease](#) as being authentic, giving Semmelweis' observations a theoretical explanation, and proved his findings as being accurate, and [Joseph Lister](#), acting on the [behalf](#) of Pasteur's research, had used Semmelweis' methods of preventing the spread of infection, through [hand washing](#), proved and confirmed to be a great success, and drastically reduced the chances and spread of infections at clinics. Semmelweis' methods had become popular and later famous, and are used at many [medical centers](#), today, to help patients, and prevent the chances and spread of infections, today.

References

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1. ↑ [1.0](#) [1.1](#) [1.2](#) "[Ignaz Semmelweis \(1818–65\)](#)". *Brought to life: Exploring the history of medicine*. Science Museum. Archived from [the original](#) on August 7, 2012. Retrieved December 8, 2012.

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