Medicine is the [science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine#cite_note-1) and [practice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxis_(process))[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine#cite_note-2) of caring for a patient, managing the [diagnosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diagnosis), [prognosis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prognosis), [prevention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preventive_medicine), [treatment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therapy), [palliation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palliative_care) of their [injury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Injury) or [disease](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disease), and [promoting their health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_promotion). Medicine encompasses a variety of [health care](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care) practices evolved to maintain and restore [health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health) by the [prevention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevention_(medical)) and treatment of [illness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illness). Contemporary medicine applies [biomedical sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biomedical_sciences), [biomedical research](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biomedical_research), [genetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_genetics), and [medical technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_technology) to [diagnose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diagnosis_(medical)), treat, and prevent injury and disease, typically through [pharmaceuticals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmaceutical) or [surgery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surgery), but also through therapies as diverse as [psychotherapy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychotherapy), [external splints and traction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Splint_(medicine)), [medical devices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_device), [biologics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biologic_medical_product), and [ionizing radiation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiation_(medicine)), amongst others.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine#cite_note-3)

Medicine has been practiced since [prehistoric times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_medicine), and for most of this time it was an [art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art) (an area of creativity and skill), frequently having connections to the [religious](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) and [philosophical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) beliefs of local culture. For example, a [medicine man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine_man) would apply [herbs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbs) and say [prayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer) for healing, or an ancient [philosopher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher) and [physician](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physician) would apply [bloodletting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloodletting) according to the theories of [humorism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humorism). In recent centuries, since the [advent of modern science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_science), most medicine has become a combination of art and science (both [basic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_science) and [applied](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Applied_science), under the [umbrella](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbrella_term) of medical science). For example, while stitching technique for [sutures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surgical_suture) is an art learned through practice, knowledge of what happens at the [cellular](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cytology) and [molecular](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molecular_medicine) level in the tissues being stitched arises through science.

Prescientific forms of medicine, now known as [traditional medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_medicine) or folk medicine, remain commonly used in the absence of scientific medicine and are thus called [alternative medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_medicine). Alternative treatments outside of scientific medicine with ethical, safety and efficacy concerns are termed [quackery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quackery).