



## Lady Mary Montagu

The Industrial Revolution was a long process, starting way before Queen Victoria took to the throne. In fact, it had been slowly building for over a hundred years by then. The harnessing of steam power meant that it expanded rapidly during her reign, but without the work of those who came before, much of it would have been impossible.

For many women during the Industrial Revolution, life was a hard struggle between earning a wage and looking after any children in the house. For some, however, it was a chance to change the world.

Lady Mary Montagu was married to a British ambassador and spent much of her life in Turkey. It was here that she observed people being inoculated for the first time. Inoculation is similar to vaccination - a person is given a weak form of an illness so that their body can build up a defence. The Turkish doctors used this method a lot, especially during epidemics.

At the time (and for quite some time after), smallpox was one of the biggest killers in the world. In the 1900s, it claimed nearly 500 million lives on its own. Roughly a third of all people who caught it died and most of those who survived were left with terrible scars, deformities and blindness.

While in Turkey, Lady Montagu noticed the doctors rubbing the pus from smallpox victims into the skin of other people. Most of them developed a mild case of the illness and never caught it again. Some people still caught a severe case and died, but many considered it worth the risk. Lady Montagu was so impressed that she had her son inoculated while she was there.

Eventually, she returned to Britain and tried to explain to the doctors how the process worked. Unfortunately, she met with a lot of resistance. She was often shouted at in the streets or belittled in the newspapers. Still, she managed to find a doctor willing to inoculate her daughter when an epidemic of smallpox broke out in England. Even then, it took a long time for people to take her seriously.

Even though she was constantly put down for her beliefs, Lady Montagu persisted. In the end,

she managed to convince Queen Caroline to try the procedure on six criminals sentenced to hang. When the men survived the epidemic, the process was carried out again on six orphans. They survived as well. Queen Caroline was so impressed that she had her own children inoculated against the disease, and the procedure started to become more widely accepted.

It took the later work of people like Edward Jenner to make vaccinations much safer but, without the work and bravery of Lady Mary Montagu, their work wouldn't have been possible. In 1979, smallpox was finally eradicated from the world.



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## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was life like for most women during the Industrial Revolution?
2. Where did Lady Montagu spend much of her life?
3. What is inoculation similar to?
4. True or false: Inoculation was completely safe.
5. Name another scientist who helped to make vaccination safer.

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**S**

How did doctors in Turkey inoculate patients?

**I**

How did other people feel about inoculation? How do you know?

**S**

Which child did Lady Montagu have vaccinated first?

**V**

Find a word that tells you how Queen Catherine felt about the successful inoculations.

**V**

Which word means that Lady Montagu's beliefs were made to seem small and insignificant?

Answers:

1. Hard work - balancing childcare and earning a wage
2. Turkey
3. Vaccination
4. False
5. Edward Jenner

S: They would rub the pus from a smallpox victim into the skin of the patient

I: They didn't like it. They shouted at her and put her down

S: Her son

V: Impressed

V: Belittled