

## Two medical books

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Today, a brief look at two very different kinds of medical books published in eighteenth-century Edinburgh.

First, a great moment in the history of medicine: the **cure for scurvy**.

Scurvy is a disease now known to be caused by insufficient intake of Vitamin C. For centuries it had been the scourge of sailors on long voyages. In the first controlled trial in medical history, Edinburgh physician **James Lind** (1716-1794) established in 1747 that feeding sailors with citrus fruit prevented them getting scurvy. He first published his observations in his *Treatise of the Scurvy* (Edinburgh, 1753).

Secondly, one of the first modern books of **popular medicine**.

**William Buchan** (1729-1805) was an Edinburgh-based doctor whose home health manual *Domestic Medicine; or, the Family Physician* (Edinburgh, 1769) became an instant success; the first print run of 5,000 sold out in months and least 142 English language editions were eventually published, as well as translations into all the major European languages. It was still in frequent use in Scotland 150 years later. The opening on display covers smallpox, a now eradicated disease, which killed an estimated 400,000 Europeans each year during the 18th century. Buchan's book also played an important role in North America, as this [Boston Medical Library](#) webpage shows.