Based on this archival photograph we stumbled upon, archaeologists at Tell Tayinat (Turkey) seemed to have treated illnesses and injuries—perhaps from the strenuous work of excavating—with cupping therapy. This practice, which has been around for thousands of years, is known in many ways around the world and has recently gained popularity among American athletes.
Ancient Medicine Scavenger Hunt

Doctors in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia helped people who were sick by diagnosing their illnesses and prescribing treatments, much like doctors do today. A key difference was that many diseases were thought to be caused by gods or evil spirits! Doctors used a number of approaches, including spells, prayers to protective and healing gods, amulets, and medicines made of herbs, spices, and other substances to treat their patients. Explore some medicine and health-related artifacts from the OI with this scavenger hunt!

How to search for objects:
1. Go to oi-idb.uchicago.edu.
2. Type or copy and paste the registration number (Example: E10669).
3. Check the box “Images Only.”
4. Press Submit.

What famous architect and physician, later worshipped as the god of medicine, is shown in this statue? E10669

This tablet references the temple of Gula, the Babylonian goddess of healing and patroness of doctors. What else is written on this tablet? A817

What is inscribed on this tablet? A3441
This kind of apotropaic (Greek for “turning back/warding off”) knife was common in nurseries in the Middle Kingdom, and would be used to protect children from disease. What is it made from? What god is shown on the knife? **E10788**

Ancient Egyptians believed the god Thoth, shown here as a baboon, invented science, and the Greeks later credited him with the invention of medicine. What protective symbol does he hold here? **E10658**

The god shown in this amulet was sometimes called on in spells to help sick children or mothers. What is her name? **E17485**

The god shown in this statue was sometimes invoked during surgeries in ancient Egypt. What is his name? **E11371**
Animal bites, especially from snakes or scorpions, were a common problem in Egypt, and a popular magical treatment option was the healing stela, or cippus, like this one, showing the god Horus triumphing over the beasts sent by Seth to harm him. In this stela, a young Horus tramples crocodiles while holding wild animals of the desert in his fists: snakes, scorpions, lions, and gazelles. The protective head of the god Bes appears over Horus’ head, and divine figures and texts cover the rest of the stela. Patients did not read the words on the stela, but drank water that was poured over the surface and “charged” by touching the images and spells. There were large versions of these stelas created to help the public, and smaller versions like this would have been carried by travelers for protection.
MAKE AN ANCIENT AMULET

What are amulets?
An amulet is an object believed to have special powers that can be given to the user or wearer. Amulets often are symbols—an amulet is an image that represents an idea. Amulets were common in ancient times, but today’s good luck charms and other similar objects can be thought of as amulets.

Why did people use amulets?
People have always tried to keep bad things from happening to them. People believed—especially in the ancient world, where belief in magic was a regular part of life—that amulets would protect them from harm like disease and bring good fortune.

Amulets had different purposes depending on their shape, color, material, and decoration. Check out these amulets from the OI!

This amulet of the demon Pazuzu may have been worn by a pregnant woman to protect herself from other demons. A25413

The Eye of Horus was an important symbol of protection in Egypt. E608

This golden fly amulet represented bravery. E9232

Animal amulets were common. This cat is made with faience, a blue-green material that represented rebirth. This cow is carved from a shell.

The face of the demon Pazuzu was also worn to protect Mesopotamians from harm. A17015

Scarabs were magical symbols of life and rebirth in ancient Egypt. E16323A-C

This Ibis, representing the god of wisdom, Thoth, poses with a miniature Maat, goddess of truth. E12244

This cow is carved from a shell.

E12245
A21522
CREATE YOUR OWN AMULET


My amulet’s power:

Create your amulet’s design based on its power. How can you symbolize this power through the amulet’s characteristics (such as its shape, color, or material)? You can use ancient or modern symbols, or create your own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Color and/or material</th>
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Does it have any decoration or writing on it? What is it?

How will your amulet be worn? Will it be a necklace? Kept in your pocket?

Sketch and Color Your Amulet!

Optional: Create a physical amulet based on your design!
Use cardboard, clay, scrunched up aluminum foil, or other materials from around your house or from outside to create your amulet.

Faience amulet of Bes, an ancient Egyptian god who protected homes. E17500