

## Health Care

Diseases and serious disabilities from accidents were much more common in the mid-1800s than they are today. Few families expected all their children to grow into adults because there were so many serious childhood diseases, such as measles, scarlet fever, and whooping cough.

People didn't completely understand the importance of such things as clean drinking water in controlling the spread of certain diseases. An outbreak of a disease that spreads very quickly in an area is called an *epidemic*. Epidemics were quite common in towns and cities. They could also spread to the countryside. Earlier in this chapter, you read about epidemics of European diseases in First Nations and Inuit communities.

For most people, health care was provided at home by family members. Many people used traditional medicines, such as herbs or roots, that they prepared themselves. Aboriginal people understood the medicinal value of a number of wild plants such as flagroot used for colds. They shared this knowledge with settlers.

People living in rural areas weren't ever likely to have the chance to see a doctor. Even in towns and cities, medical care was very simple because doctors could do little to treat most illnesses or injuries. For example, there were no antibiotics to cure infections or even Aspirin for pain. This meant that what would be a simple accident today, such as a broken arm, could easily turn deadly.

wide variety of special  
ics" was available. These  
cs claimed to cure almost  
kind of illness. They were  
ested, and there were no  
against false advertising,  
any tonics were just  
ured water or alcohol.  
could be bought in  
s or from sellers who  
lled around the  
tryside.

