

Large-print book

Please do not remove from the gallery







Exploring Medicine

Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries

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Exploring Medicine gallery introduction

The story of how medicine has changed over the years combines long-held traditions with scientific breakthroughs. The objects on display here have been chosen to tell that story, and are taken from one of the largest collections of medical objects in the world. Created by pharmaceutical tycoon Henry Wellcome (1853–1936), this collection represents a history that is vital to our future, and which continues to grow under the Science Museum's care.

The objects show the many different ways we have tried to stay well and live longer, and our attempts to cure or cope with illness. That search for good health has brought us hope as well as heartbreak. Will you find your story here?

Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries consists of five galleries, each looking at a specific area within medicine. There is a large-print book for each of the galleries.

Accessible features

Features for blind and partially sighted visitors

An audio description app called Audio Eyes is available on iOS devices for the Medicine and Information Age galleries. The app offers audio-only descriptions for selected exhibits and enables you to roam freely through these galleries. You can either download it from the app store, or borrow a free device from the Information desk located at the Exhibition Road entrance.

Accessible events

A programme of accessible events will be delivered within the gallery, including audio-described tours. Please refer to the Science Museum website for the schedule and additional details, or ask at the museum Information desk. These accessible events are part of a wider Medicine events programme for adults and children.

Wi-Fi is available throughout the gallery.

Gallery layout

The displays in this gallery are not divided into separate zones; instead, they are arranged in a mass of small compartments in the central glass cabinets. In total there are almost 1000 objects on display. Some are displayed as individual, even unique, objects. Others are grouped to display a range of similar, common items – including stethoscopes, prosthetic limbs, and feeding bottles for children – revealing their common features as well as their variations.

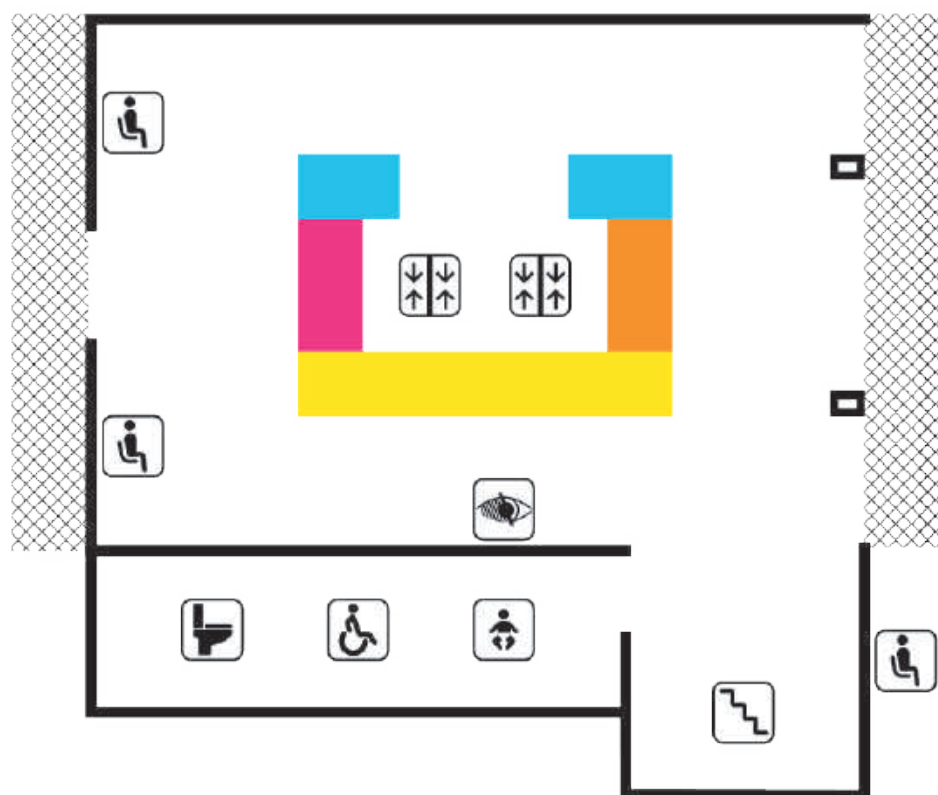
The aim of this display is not to analyse each object closely. Instead, this massing of objects tries to give a sense of the breath of the Medicine collection and the sheer quantity of objects within it. As some of the objects are displayed high up, near the ceiling, and very few objects have a descriptive label.

The objects range from a carved wooden figure from the Nicobar Islands southeast of India, designed to ward off bad spirits; to a replica of the first obstetrical forceps. Other items on display include a wooden acupuncture model; medicine chests taken on pioneering expeditions including one used by Captain Scott on his ill-fated Antarctic expedition; and the world's first ambulance bicycle. Also on display are fertility figures; dentures dating back as far as the 18th century made of materials including gold, porcelain, ivory and bone; sight test equipment and a wide variety of spectacles; and a life-size female anatomical teaching model with removable internal organs.

The Exploring Medicine gallery is located on one floor. It is a rectangular-shaped space that can be accessed from multiple entrances: Lift D from the south, the Medicine and Bodies gallery from the east, Stair D from the north and the Medicine and Treatments gallery from the west. The gallery is about 14 metres wide by 22 metres long. The adjacent lifts and stairs provide access to the rest of the museum.

The gallery displays surround the central lifts on all four sides and visitors can browse them as they wish. Several key objects have been chosen as star objects with accompanying text printed on the glass.

Gallery map



Wall case A

Wall case B

Wall case C

Wall case D

Wall

Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries (continued)

Seating

Stairs

Lift

Large-print and Braille books

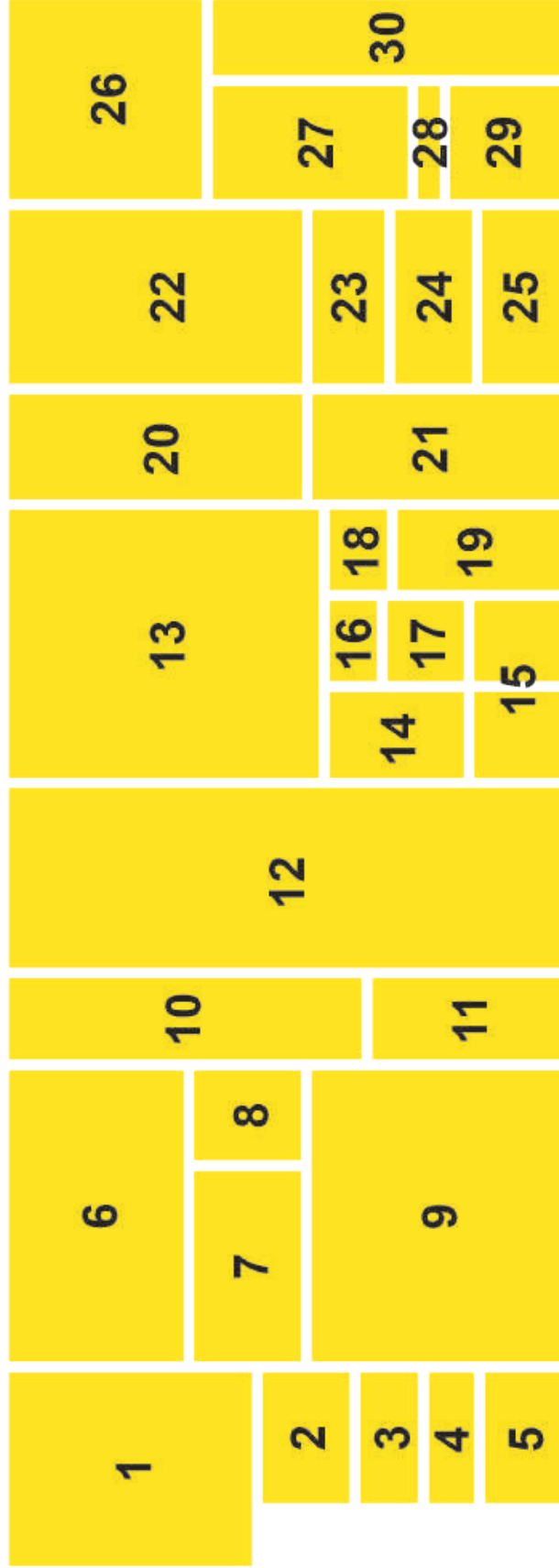
Toilets

Accessible toilets

Baby changing



Wall case A



Please note: The colours and numbering used in this book do not feature in the gallery. They are included here to assist readers to find gallery sections in the book.

1. Parturition or birthing chair

1600–1700

This parturition or birthing chair was used to support women during childbirth. The seat is U-shaped to provide a clear route for the baby to emerge and to allow midwives and physicians to assist. These chairs were often used by multiple generations of a single family, and passed down as family heirlooms.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A602128



2. Saving the lives of newborn babies

1960–1970

Some babies need incubators to support their bodies after birth. Before the 1970s homebirths were common, so portable incubators were invented to allow the baby to travel from home to the hospital safely. This model was made in the mid-1900s.

Science Museum Group
Object no. 1997-1006



3. Tobacco smoke enema kit

1800–1850

The idea of reviving someone who has nearly drowned by blowing tobacco smoke into their rectum seems bizarre. To physicians in the 1700s, however, this approach was entirely rational.

The enema kit was thought to work by providing warmth and stimulating vapours. A number of kits were placed along the River Thames by the Royal Humane Society, an organisation established to promote life-saving.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A600127



4. Cupping the body

1980–1990

Cupping is an ancient practice used throughout the world. It uses a vacuum to draw blood to the skin's surface to treat muscular conditions. It is a common treatment used by athletes and easily spotted by the red marks it leaves on the body.

Japan. Donated by R Kelley. Science Museum Group.
Object no. 2002-479



5. Ifa divination

1850–1920

These wooden divination bowls are used to store the 16 pine nuts used in Ifa divination. These nuts are thrown by the diviner, who then interprets their positioning. Divination has been used for centuries in many cultures, to answer questions relating to health.

Nigeria. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A301226



6. The bendy stretcher

1915–1918

The trenches of the First World War were designed in a zigzag shape, but they made navigation with a stretcher almost impossible. This flexible innovation helped stretcher-bearers move the wounded through the trenches.

Britain. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A630689



7. Spanish and Italian pharmacy glass jars 1600–1800

Apothecaries stored herbs and medicines in highly decorative glass jars. They not only displayed the available products, but they demonstrated the owner's wealth and status. Several displayed here have their former contents listed on them in Latin.

Italy. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A77260

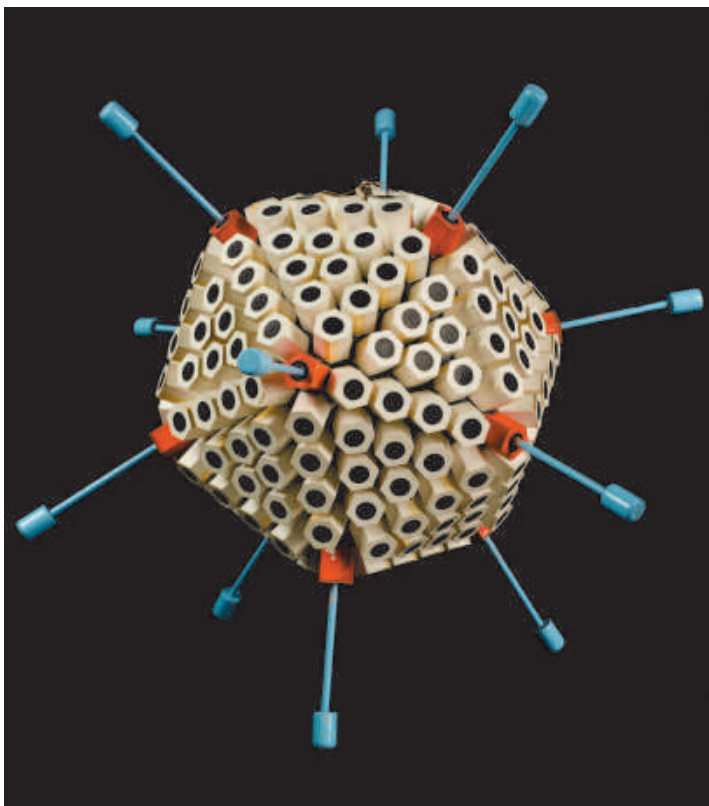


8. Modelling microbes

1974–1976

This cardboard model shows adenovirus 5, which causes respiratory infections in humans. Other varieties cause conjunctivitis and gastroenteritis. Viruses are far too small to see with the naked eye, but models can show their shape and structure without magnification.

England. Donated by the John Innes Institute
Department of Ultrastructure. Science Museum Group.
Object no. 1981-2206



9. The world's first ambulance bicycle

2000

This bike was owned by Tom Lynch MBE, an ambulance officer and former BMX racing champion, who adapted it to carry life-saving medical equipment quickly through heavy traffic. In 2000 he established the London Ambulance Cycle Response Unit, the first dedicated bicycle-based service.

Paramedic cyclists carry a lightweight and portable defibrillator, oxygen and pain-relieving drugs, among other supplies.

England. Donated by Tom Lynch MBE, 2016.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 2016-356



10. Surgical tools

1800–1930

Different surgeries require different pieces of equipment, with their own unique designs and purposes. Displayed here are saws and forceps for cutting; retractors for holding back flesh, muscle and fat; and scoops for scraping tissue. They were made between the late 1800s and the early 1900s.

Spain. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A85257



11. Canes for all occasions

1700–1910

Distant cousins of the ones we see today, these canes were more likely used for fashion than mobility. Many were made from rare and luxurious materials, such as narwhal tusk. Often referred to as the unicorn of the sea, narwhals are whales with a large tusk on their head, which is really an overgrown tooth.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A121255



12. The many faces of medicine

1550–1910

Henry Wellcome's collection contains depictions of faces from all over the world, including death masks, surgical training tools and spirit masks. The familiar features of faces on display here are all connected to ideas of health and medicine.

Austria. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A606412



13. Studying animal anatomy

1850–1880

Made of wax and papier-mâché, this anatomical model of a horse was a teaching tool in the late 1800s. Models have played a key role in improving our understanding of both animal and human anatomy.

France. Science Museum Group. Object no. 1981-2176



14. Safe sex

1900–1987

There have been many types of contraception throughout history, including chemical and hormonal methods, barriers and implantable devices. Condoms are now the most common method of contraception and the most successful at preventing sexually transmitted infections.

Germany. Donated by Sandra Bicknell. Science Museum Group. Object no. 1987-899 pt 5



15. Tracing tuberculosis

1955

In the 1950s mobile X-ray units were used to detect pulmonary tuberculosis in people's lungs. This is a model of one of these X-ray units; the figures inside are clothed to reassure people that they did not need to undress to have an X-ray.

England. Donated by Lancashire Mobile Chest X-Ray Service. Science Museum Group. Object no. 1984-252



16. Papier-mâché teaching aid 1913

Observing human anatomy on a deceased body is difficult. Models like this make it much easier, as they last much longer and do not smell. This one was made in Paris and gave students a rare insight into the structures inside the human eye.

France. Donated by Royal Holloway & Bedford New College. Science Museum Group. Object no. 1996-277/11



17. Pocket-sized DNA sequencer 2014

It took scientists 13 years and \$3 billion to sequence the entire human genome – the genetic information contained in every cell in our bodies. The process was completed in 2003 using custom-built machines, each as large as a wardrobe. This pocket-sized device, which plugs into the USB port of a laptop computer, sequences shorter strands of DNA in minutes. In 2014 it could be bought for just £600.

England. Donated by Oxford Nanopore Technologies, 2015. Science Museum Group. Object no. 2015-458



18. EEG net

2010

This net is lined with electrodes and placed around the patient's head. The electrodes detect the brain's electrical activity, creating an electroencephalogram (EEG) report. This technique is most often used to diagnose epilepsy or other brain disorders.

USA. Donated by Ann Bunnenberg. Science Museum Group. Object no. 2018-449



19. Lancet cases

1544–1900

Stored in fancy boxes, lancets were a staple tool for medical professionals. Their cases were made of expensive material such as sharkskin, mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell to impress potential customers.

Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A617235



20. Bedpans

1800–1920

Bedpans are used by people who are unable to access a toilet. The ones on display here are enamel, earthenware, pewter and creamware, a type of pottery. Now they are more likely to be made of cardboard and plastic.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A626810



21. Lucy Baldwin pain relief machine 1955–1980

This machine was used by midwives in the 1950s to deliver pain-relieving oxygen and nitrous oxide, also known as ‘gas and air’, to women in labour. It was named in honour of Lucy Baldwin who, after losing her first child, campaigned extensively for maternal health equality. In 1929 she established the Anaesthetics Appeal Fund with the aim of making pain relief affordable for all mothers.

England. Donated by University College Hospital, 1984
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1984-1743



22. Grinding, mashing and mixing medicines 1500–1900

Now more often used in cooking, pestles and mortars have a long medical history. Ingredients were crushed by apothecaries and then made into medicines. People who could not afford this service mashed and mixed their own home remedies instead.

India. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A657140



23. Tools for teeth

1700–1960

Would you let your dentist put these tools in your mouth? Without pain relief, people were held down while their teeth were yanked, twisted and pulled. So next time you dread going to the dentist, remember: it could be worse.

Germany. Donated by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A3198



24. Toothpaste from the past

1850–1920

Far prettier than today's plastic tubes, stoneware toothpaste pots were common from the 1840s.

Dental hygiene has a far longer history than many people expect: the Ancient Egyptians developed a dental cream thousands of years ago.

Science Museum Group. Object no. 1984-1371/38



25. Ivory, wood and human teeth

1780–1980

People have tried to replace or restore lost teeth for thousands of years, for both aesthetic and functional reasons. Before plastic was invented, they were made from a variety of materials including ivory, wood and human teeth.

England. Science Museum Group. Object no. 1984-1339



26. Pharmacy glassware

1710–1920

Glassware like this was commonly used in scientific experiments in the past. These examples were probably used by pharmacists to distil the ingredients used to make medicines.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A639753



27. Acupuncture model

1681

The pathways and points of Chinese acupuncture are marked on this wooden figure. The therapy, practised for thousands of years, teaches that energy must flow freely around the body through vessels called 'jing luo', or meridians, to ensure good health. Acupuncture aims to improve the flow of energy, known as 'chi' or 'qi', by applying needles to specific points on the body's surface.

Japan. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A604024



28. Netsuke: the pocket replacement

1700–1920

Kimonos, the traditional Japanese garments, do not have pockets. Netsuke are attached to clothes and designed to hold small bags, allowing easy transportation of possessions, including medicines or tobacco. They sometimes depict medical practices and techniques. The word comes from the Japanese 'ne', meaning root, and 'tsuke', to attach.

Japan. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A645063



29. Sharing oxygen and saving lives

1900–1930

Oxygen was an important treatment for soldiers affected by poisonous gases during the First World War. Adapted versions of Haldane masks allowed four soldiers to receive oxygen at once, providing vital care close to the fighting.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A640876



30. Medicine chest used by Captain Scott in Antarctica 1910

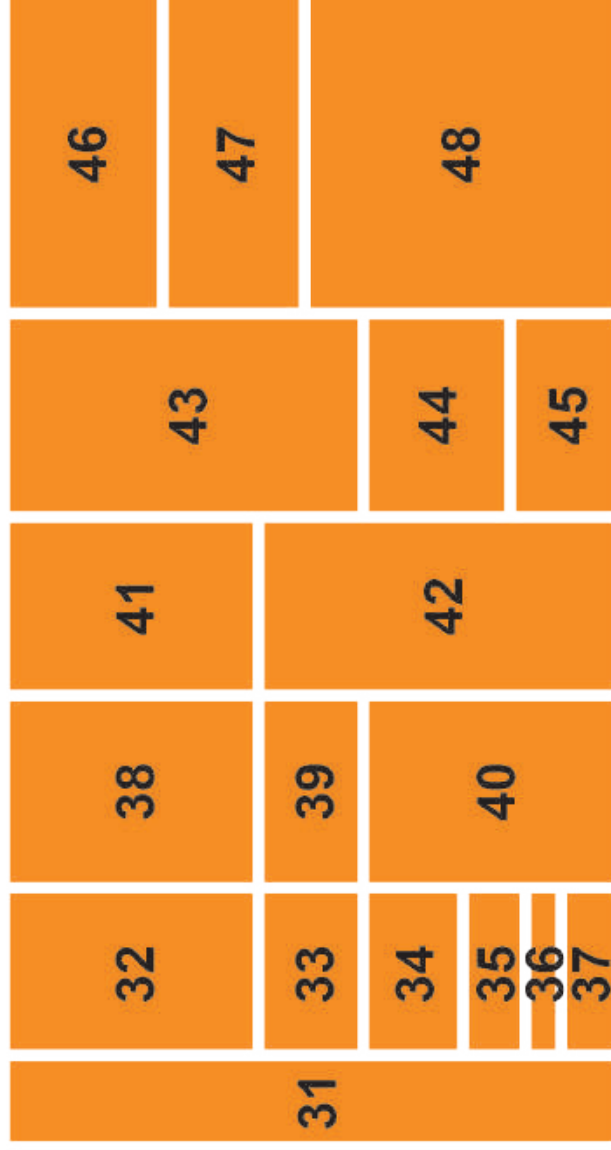
Recognising the potential of celebrity endorsement, Henry Wellcome supplied free kits containing his compact Tabloid medicines to well-known explorers. This chest was used on Captain Scott's ill-fated British Antarctic expedition of 1910–13.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. 1981-1007





Wall case B



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31. Decorative pill tiles

1670–1800

Apothecaries mixed medicine components together to form a thick, pliable substance which they then rolled on tiles and cut into the correct shapes.

Adorned with the arms of various societies, pill tiles were decorative objects that hinted at their owner's social status.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A43111



32. Pain-free surgery

1950–1970

The Centanaest ventilator, used in Britain between the 1950s and the 1970s, housed up to six cylinders and administered a blend of anaesthetics uniquely designed for each patient. Pressure was monitored via the dials and gauges.

Britain. Donated by Ipswich Hospital.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1998-488



33. Hospital hygiene 1910–1950

These buckets were used in Farnborough Hospital between 1900 and 1950 for the transport of used, bloody or soiled dressings. Some wrappings were incinerated, while others were washed and reused.

England. Donated by Farnborough Hospital.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1988-599/2



34. Medical enemas

1600–1900

Enema syringes came in all shapes and sizes and were designed to introduce liquids or medicines into the body through the rectum, an act that is depicted on this earthenware jar made in Spain in the 1600s.

Spain. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A643327



35. Merman

1800–1900

There are curiosities among the cures in Henry Wellcome's collection, and how curious to find a merman. It is a papier-mâché model – part monkey, fish and bird, with teeth, scales and talons. Mermen and mermaids exist in myths and legends worldwide. 'Specimens' were hugely popular among wealthy Europeans as prized additions to their private collections.

Indonesia. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A104048



36. Itombwa used for diagnosing the cause of illness

1880–1920

These wooden carved statues, itombwa, were made in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1880 and 1920. They are used by a diviner to communicate with spirits that in turn help the petitioner to understand the cause of illness.

Democratic Republic of Congo. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group.
Object no. A657310



37. Skin scrapers

1880–1930

Carved in the shape of animals between the 1800s and the 1930s, these objects were purchased by Henry Wellcome in the early 1900s. There is some debate about whether ‘skin scrapers’ were ever used, or if they were made to sell to Western collectors.

Sudan. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A651665



38. Saint Sebastian

1520–1530

Christians have prayed to saints for help with ill health for thousands of years. Sebastian was executed for his faith in AD 287 and was prayed to during the Black Death in 1348. Since then Sebastian has been remembered as a plague saint.

Germany. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A634377



39. Extracting DNA

1989

Used in the 1980s, this Genepure system extracted DNA from biological samples including blood, plant tissues, viruses and cell cultures, in just four hours. The DNA could then be used to genetically modify foodstuffs or in the animal cloning process.

England. Donated by Applied Biosystems Limited.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1996-312



40. Smoking and snuff

1700–1920

Ornate snuffboxes, pipes and cigar holders were expensive, luxurious items when the majority of these were made in the 1700 and 1800s. Smoking was believed to prevent the user from inhaling bad smells that caused disease. It was not until the 1950s that the link between smoking and cancer was established.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A14525/1



41. Barbers' shaving bowls

1700–1930

Semicircular cutouts in the rim of these bowls allowed a customer's chin to be placed comfortably, and to reduce mess when shaving. Some bowls may have been used to catch blood during blood-letting.

North Africa. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A39039



42. Anatomical teaching model

1900

Anatomical models, such as this life-size plaster example from around 1900, were created to teach human anatomy without the need for dissection. Female versions were often called Venus after the Roman goddess of love and beauty. This one features removable organs, some of which can be opened up to reveal their intricate interior. How many can you name?

Science Museum Group. 1986-1135



43. Ancestral figures

1800–1900

Ancestral figures like this decorate spaces only permitted for use by men throughout Melanesia. Carved from wood and later painted to represent deities or family members, they are used to ward off evil spirits.

Papua New Guinea. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A100848



44. Just a spoonful of sugar

1700–1970

Almost unrecognisable from the spoons and cups we use today, these spoons were used to serve medicines. Some have covered ends to stop liquid from spilling over the edges, or even to hide unappetising medicine from anxious patients.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A608496



45. Divining diagnoses

1750–1900

People have used divination – seeking knowledge through supernatural means – to understand illness for hundreds of years. There are many different types of divination, including the practice of interpreting oil patterns in water from bowls like these.

Middle East. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A155136



46. Marketing medicines

1650–1850

How do you advertise medicines if your customers cannot read? Signs like this indicated to passers-by where they could buy medicine by depicting medical objects such as the pestle and mortar. What objects would you use to promote a pharmacy?

Netherlands. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A631337



47. Tracey's prostheses

1963–1971

These prostheses belonged to Tracey Baynam, whose lower limb development was affected by thalidomide before she was born. Thalidomide was sold throughout the world as a safe treatment for morning sickness but was later discovered to affect fetal development. Created especially for Tracey, these prostheses show her growth from 11 months to 9 years old.

Donated by The Thalidomide Society.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 2017-77



48. Prosthetic limbs

1890–2012

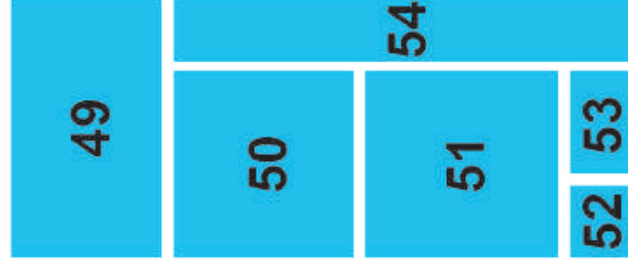
Prostheses have been worn to replace missing or affected parts of the body for centuries. Sometimes they transform the workings of the body and prolong or save lives, but they can be used for cosmetic reasons.

Britain. Donated by Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton Healthcare NHS Trust.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1999-547





Wall case C



Please note: The colours and numbering used in this book do not feature in the gallery. They are included here to assist readers to find gallery sections in the book.

49. Selling the apothecary's services 1700–1870

These signs were probably used to advertise an apothecary's services. One resembles a unicorn's head, as 'unicorn horns', which were usually narwhal or walrus tusks, were used in antidotes for poisons. The other two depict jesters, one of which has a golden ball, representing a pill.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A631343



50. Stethoscopes for listening to your heart 1850–1997

Invented by René Laënnec in 1816, stethoscopes have come to symbolise doctors and the health professions. The word comes from the Greek ‘stêphos’, meaning breast, and ‘skopéō’, meaning examine. They are used to assess a patient’s health by listening to their heartbeat.

Science Museum Group. Object no. 1997-1170



51. Memento mori from Europe and Japan 1600–1936

Medicine seeks to preserve life, but these objects are emblems of death known as memento mori, Latin for ‘remember you will die’. They remind us that life is fleeting and not to be wasted on the pursuit of material wealth. Ironically, memento mori became fashionable and expensive in the 1700s to 1800s. Some here embrace a dark sense of humour.

Japan. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A117867



52. Canopic jars for the next life

2000 BC – AD 100

Canopic jars were used in Ancient Egyptian burials to protect the four vital organs – lungs, liver, stomach and intestines – removed during mummification.

These empty jars depict two of the four sons of Horus, who guard each of these organs. The human-headed Imsety protects the liver, and the falcon-headed Qebehsenuef protects the intestines.

Egypt. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A634862



53. Irradiating infection

1900–1913

This X-ray tube was used to treat ringworm, a fungal infection, in London schoolchildren. Following their discovery in 1895, X-rays were commonly used to treat ringworm – a process called irradiation. Despite growing concerns about the links between radiation and cancer, this treatment persisted until the 1960s.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A600225



54. Wellcome's medicine jars

1600–1800

Once containing medicinal ingredients, these Spanish apothecary jars bear the crest of the Habsburg family, rulers of the Holy Roman Empire between the 1500s and 1700s. They were among many collected by pharmaceutical entrepreneur Henry Wellcome to tell the history of his trade.

Spain. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A61606



55. Flushing toilets and water filters

1880–1915

This water closet and water filter were created to improve public hygiene. Influenced by Thomas Crapper's flushing toilet of 1872, water closets connected homes to new sewer systems, reducing water contamination and preventing the spread of diseases like cholera. Household filters used carbon to absorb impurities in drinking water, making it safer to consume.

England. Donated by W E Clark.

Science Museum Group. Object no. 1970-422/1



56. Retorts, condensers, funnels and bottles 1650–1920

Retorts, condensers, funnels and bottles like these were once a common sight in pharmacies, helping the apothecaries or pharmacists create and display their wares. They were used to extract medicinal properties from substances by heating ingredients, and then cooling the vapours produced into their purified, liquid form – a process called distillation.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A630069



57. 'Yellow Peril' powered wheelchair 1981

This powerchair, nicknamed the Yellow Peril, was designed by engineer Dan Everard for his 18-month-old daughter Ruth. In 1981 Ruth was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy – a genetic condition that causes severe muscle weakness. Within weeks of taking the controls, she could explore her environment independently alongside her friends. Today the Everards' company Dragonmobility Ltd produces elevating powerchairs for all ages.

England. Lent by Ruth Everard.
Science Museum Group. Object no. L2018-93



58. Apothecary jars

Before 1932

Decorative yet practical, apothecary jars like these once contained medicinal ingredients that apothecaries and their customers used to create remedies, in both the apothecary's shop and at home. Some are covered in parchment and sealed with string, keeping the contents fresh and preserving their often-pungent aromas.

Iran. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A112961



59. Buddha's alms bowl and albino elephants

Before 1936

Henry Wellcome and his collecting agents believed that this statue depicted an albino elephant carrying the Buddha's sacred alms bowl or Patra, an image common in several Buddhist cultures. The Buddha's alms bowl and albino elephants symbolise achieving enlightenment, a spiritual state believed to help people overcome suffering.

China. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A659177



60. Medicines in the making 1820–1949

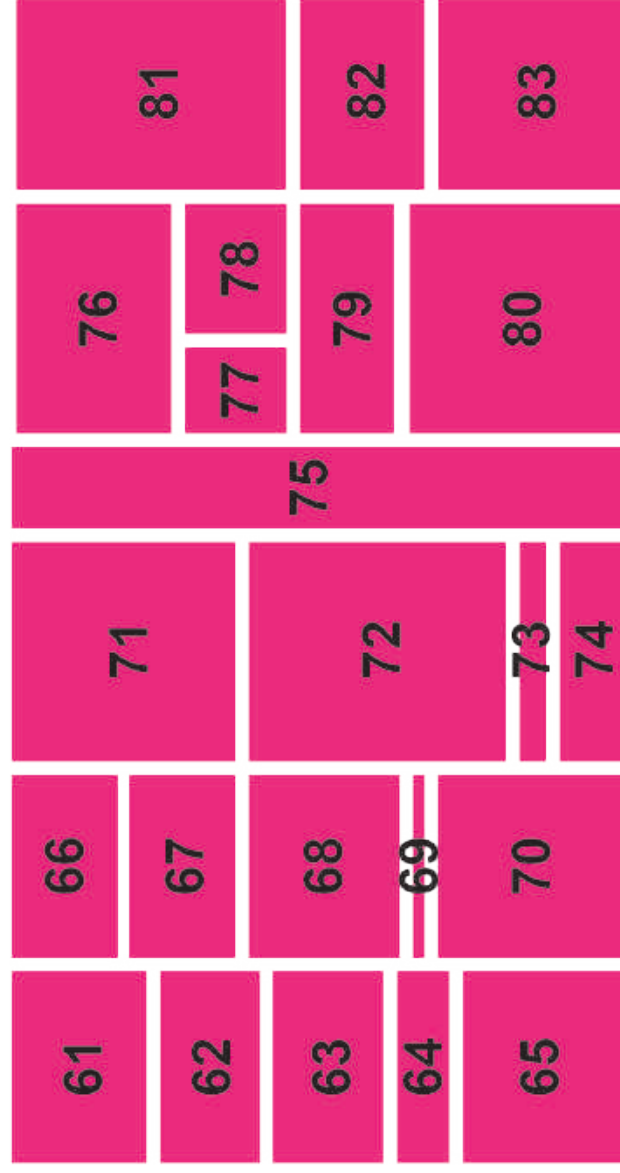
Full of pods, seeds, bark and gum, jars of ‘materia medica’ – ingredients used in the creation of medicines – were collected by Henry Wellcome. Wellcome employed a network of agents who acquired these specimens on his behalf. He was interested in the rationale behind the treatments employed by peoples across the world, and what he saw as the evolution of modern medicine.

Turkey. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A674926





Wall case D



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61. Model 'gandau' funerary figure

1800–1900

Placed over the graves of loved ones, 'gandau' figures are traditionally carved by the Kalasha people in Chitral, which is now in Pakistan. Typically life-sized, and physically representing the deceased, they are understood to embody part of their spirit, becoming living monuments. These smaller model figures were possibly carved to sell to tourists.

Lent by Wellcome Collection to the
Science Museum Group. Object no. A119854



62. Specula for internal examinations 1800–1970

Specula are used to widen openings in the body, allowing areas inside the body to be examined, swabbed and treated without the need for surgery. Many of the specula on display were created specifically to perform vaginal and rectal examinations.

France. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A647134



63. Studying the reflexes with Sherrington's cat 1940–1980

With enlarged joints and eyes, this model cat was created between 1940 and 1980 to demonstrate animal reflexes. It may have been made for or by Sir Charles Scott Sherrington, a British physiologist whose research on animals improved our understanding of the role of the nervous system.

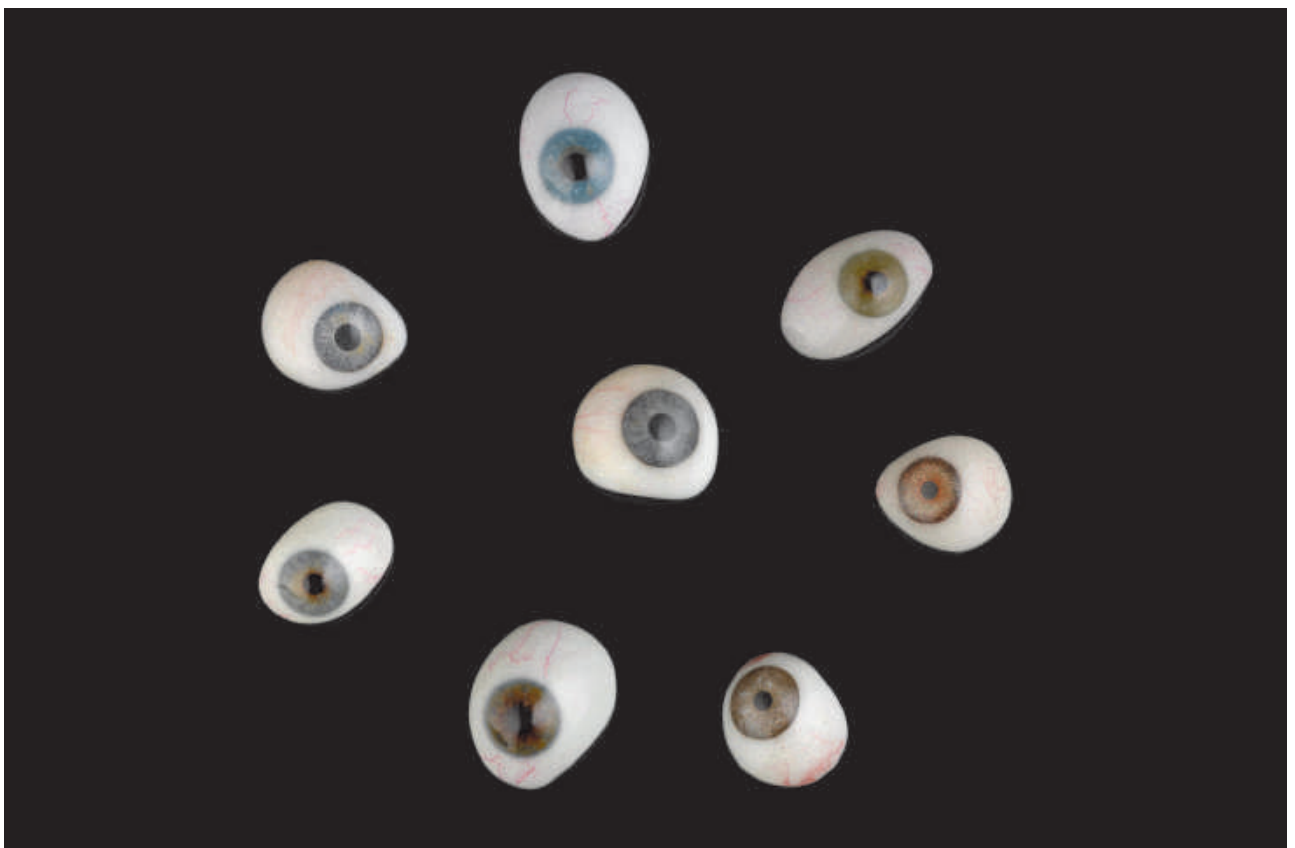
Britain. Donated by Dr Thelma Williams.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1999-917



64. Glass eyes

Sometimes called the windows to the soul, our eyes and their colour are unique to each of us. If one is missing, a specialist might create a prosthetic eye for cosmetic reasons or to support the structure of the face. Created by a manufacturer in the early 1900s, selections of glass eyes like these impressed potential customers with their intricate detail and helped them find the perfect match.

England. Science Museum Group. Object no. 2019-67



65. Mother and child figures

1850–1930

These statues were created in countries across Africa including Nigeria, Gambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some were created to protect mothers and children from harm, and several honour deities or spirits associated with fertility, maternity and twins, including the Yoruba deities Odudua and Shango.

Democratic Republic of Congo. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group.
Object no. A221839



66. Davidson double optometer 1880s

Optometrists and ophthalmologists are doctors trained to examine eyes and prescribe visual aids such as spectacles and contact lenses. The Davidson double optometer was created to help them determine which lenses would improve their patients' eyesight. Patients looked through the overlapping lenses, while the two wheels rotated, swapping lenses until the right strength was found.

Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A600356



67. Eye test types

1850–1940

Test types are a familiar sight to anyone who has ever had an eye test. By asking patients to read rows of letters or symbols that get increasingly smaller, optometrists use these tests to find the right lens strength for their patients.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A606429



68. Two hundred years of spectacles 1750–1975

Spectacles use lenses of different strengths to change the way our eyes process light. From affordable plastic specs to expensive and fashionable eyeglasses made from mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell, these spectacles have all been created in the last 224 years to improve their wearer's eyesight.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A681818



69. Eyebaths: a sight for sore eyes

1700–1950

These eyebaths were used to clean or soothe the eyes. The cup would be filled with liquid and pressed around the open eye, washing away any irritants. Plastic eyebaths continue to be used today, but many prefer to use eyedrops instead.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A606622



70. Ear trumpets and hearing aids

1700–2018

Used by people experiencing hearing impairments, these devices were worn to direct sound towards the ear drum. In the 1700s large and ornate ear trumpets were all the rage, whereas many people today prefer discreet devices such as behind-the-ear hearing aids and even ‘invisible’ aids that sit inside the ear canal.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A602622



71. Posset pots

1630–1800

These tin-glazed earthenware posset pots were designed to be used by people with minor illnesses such as colds. A mixture of curdled milk, ale, breadcrumbs and spices, known as a posset, was sipped through the spouts of these pots.

Netherlands. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A43302



72. Protective figure to ward off bad spirits 1880–1925

This 'kareau' or scare devil was created to deter spirits believed to bring bad luck or disease. People of the Nicobar Islands placed them outside their homes. Carved by spiritual healers, the figures took various forms. This one appears in Western clothing, perhaps reflecting the perceived power of European invaders. Its wings represent ancestral spirits

Lent by Wellcome Collection to the
Science Museum Group. Object no. A655618



73. An apothecary's alligator

1800s

Suspended on the walls or from the ceiling, 'natural wonders' like this stuffed alligator often decorated apothecaries' shops between the 1500s and 1700s. Apothecaries were medical practitioners who prepared remedies for their customers' ailments. Unfamiliar creatures and objects, such as this alligator, symbolised their ability to access and harness the medicinal properties of the natural world.

Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A632274



74. The genetic inheritance of chickens 1914–1924

This pair of cockerels was bred to investigate genetic inheritance. By studying their plumage, Thomas Hunt Morgan explored the effects of dominant and recessive genes in deciding the type of feathering each cockerel inherited from its parents. He later uncovered the role played by chromosomes in heredity.

USA. Donated by Ross Owen.

Science Museum Group. Object no. 1996-136 pts 1, 2



75. Making the microscopic visible

1700–1890

Between 1590 and 1600 compound microscopes were invented by layering spectacle lenses in hollow tubes. Microscopes have become instrumental in medical and scientific research exploring organisms that are invisible to the naked eye and the genetic structures that make us who we are.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A601261 pt 1



76. Bespoke cot for a wealthy child

1500–1650

This cradle, with the initials 'H. D.' painted onto its headboard, was used between the 1500s and 1600s and is painted with the biblical stories of kings Saul and David. At the time most children could expect a plain wooden cot at best, so it is likely that this baby was born into great wealth and privilege.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A97341



77. Artificial hip joints

1960–2008

Conditions such as arthritis can sometimes make hip replacement surgery necessary. These artificial hip joints replace either the 'ball' or 'socket' element of the hip joint. Made from materials such as Perspex, titanium and even glass, they improve mobility and comfort.

France. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A600296



78. Infant weighing scales

1890–1920

Used in England between 1890 and 1930, these scales weighed infants up to 25 pounds (about 11kg). Amid fears surrounding infant mortality and child welfare, and the health and fitness of the nation more generally, medical practitioners at this time introduced regular weighing of young children as a means of monitoring healthy development from birth.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A200718



79. Portable incubator for newborns 1955–1966

This Oxygenaire portable incubator was used to transport newborn infants to St Anne's Hospital in Bristol, at a time when most children were born at home. Made and used after 1955, it kept infants safe and warm during ambulance journeys, protecting against life-threatening conditions such as hypothermia.

England. Donated by R Ford.
Science Museum Group. Object no. 1997-1005



80. Obstetrical forceps and difficult births 1700–1980

Obstetrical forceps, used to assist difficult births, were first developed in the 1600s. Curved to grasp the baby's head, these forceps were created to rotate and ease the baby from the birth canal during a complicated labour. Henry Wellcome amassed more than 24,000 surgical instruments, including numerous forceps.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A600050



81. Parturition or birthing chair

1600–1700

This parturition or birthing chair was used to support women during childbirth. The seat is U-shaped to provide a clear route for the baby to emerge and to allow midwives and physicians to assist. These chairs were often used by multiple generations of a single family, and passed down as family heirlooms.

Europe. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A602128



82. Feeding bottles, cups and boats

850 BC – 2017

These vessels were all used to feed hungry infants and were crafted to make what can be a messy task easier for carers. Several may have been difficult to clean because of their design, especially those with long spouts. Influenced by the discovery of bacteria, more recent bottle-shaped examples made from glass and plastic are easier to sterilise.

England. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A608513



83. Cradleboard with model baby

1880–1920

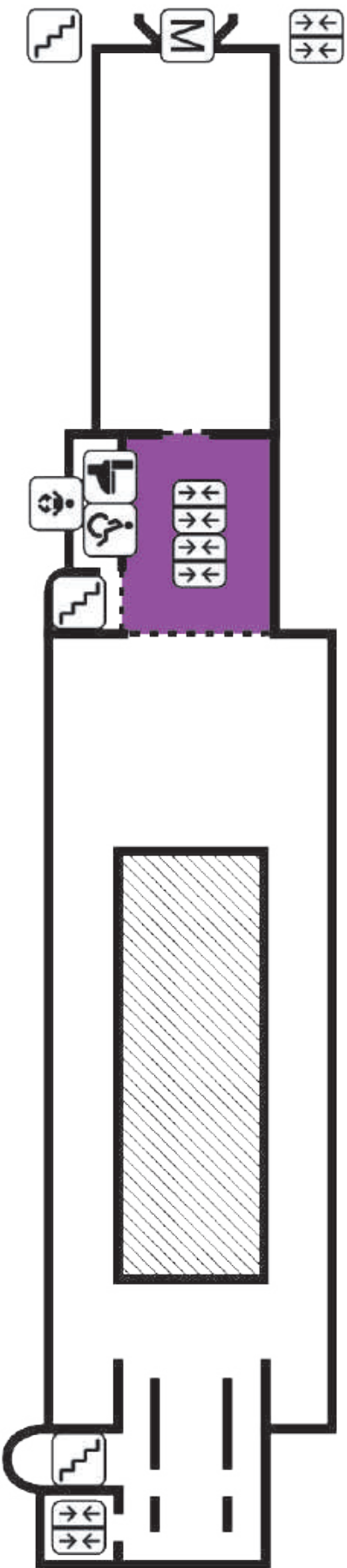
You don't see baby carriers like this in London. Made of stretched animal hide, it has the intricate beading specific to a tribe. The baby was secured by straps inside, its head protected by a woven hood. Growing up in the American Midwest in the 1860s, Henry Wellcome witnessed the persecution of the Sioux people and developed a lifelong interest in Native American culture.

USA. Lent by Wellcome Collection to the Science Museum Group. Object no. A655883



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Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries overview map



Exploring Medicine

Wall

Atrium

Main museum

Stairs

Lift

Toilets

Accessible toilets

Baby changing