



Life in Tudor Times

5. Trust Me, I'm a Tudor Doctor

EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: People up and down King Henry's kingdom are afflicted with all manner of bugs blight and boils. That's why I, esteemed Doctor Edward Strangeways, am travelling the country, curing illness with the very best modern Tudor medicine. Welcome to Trust Me, I'm a Tudor Doctor. Let's go and save some sickly locals. Before I start, I've got a question. Do the people here know where illnesses come from?

PERSON 1: It's to do with the stars and the planets, isn't it. What sort of moon's in the sky and that. I'm a Capricorn, so I've got to look out for the pox.

PERSON 2: Curses, I reckon. Shifty looking bloke used to come round here. One day, he accused me of selling him bad meat and went off muttering something under his breath. The next day, I came down with an awful fever. I reckon he bewitched me.

PERSON 3: I do think hanging around with the wrong people can make you sick.

PERSON 4: Aye.

PERSON 3: ...and sinning, doing bad things.

PERSON 4: Oh, aye.

PERSON 3: Oh, and smelling bad smells.

PERSON 4: *Sniff* Sorry.

EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: As an experienced Tudor doctor, I can confirm that all of these ideas are completely correct. Now, let's meet some patients.

PATIENT 1: Oh, my head is pounding. It's hurt for two days. And now I feel sick.

EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: I see. Have you got your bottle of wee? Ah good. Let's have a look. Ah, yes. You'll need herbs to make you well, camomile for your stomach and a mixture of lavender, sage and marjoram for the headache. If that doesn't work, just press a length of rope to your head.

PATIENT 2: I can't bear this. I've been sweating and shivering for days. And now this rash has come up.



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EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: Sweating and a rash. I think I'll need to look at your wee, please. Goodness me, you need to be bled! Pop these leeches on your skin and let them feed until they're full. If you still feel rough nip to the barber's. They'll happily drain a little more from you.

PATIENT 3: Well, I'm guessing you can see I'm turning yellow. But what you can't see is the hot throbbing pain in my big toe. It's agony.

EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: Your big toe you say? Better have a look at your wee then. Jaundice and gout. Certain of it. Thank goodness for modern thorough tests, eh? For the yellowing, drink down nine lice in ale every morning for a week. For the toe, mix worms, herbs and pig marrow. Then boil them all up. Rub the mixture on the spot that hurts, and you'll be pain free in no time. Now, let's hear why you should only trust a Tudor doctor. Some people claim that so-called 'wise women', like this one here, can heal diseases. As a doctor who, for one visit, charges what a typical person earns in three months, I need to stress that this much cheaper option is not the one to go for. These people offer a load of nonsense. Stick with the professionals who cure smallpox by hanging red curtains round your bed. We know what we're talking about. Now, let's check back in with my patients to see how their treatments are going.

PATIENT 1: The herb didn't work. So here I am, with the rope.

PATIENT 2: The treatment has been quite draining. But it's gonna work soon, right? Right?

PATIENT 3: My skin's still yellow and my toe still hurts, but I'm alive, unlike all those lice and worms I've gone through. You've got to count your blessings, hey?

EDWARD STRANGEWAYS: So, there we have it. Another successful day. The cure's will work in time. Trust me. Not that I'll be sticking around to check. Join me next time when I cure a man's deafness with an eel, a pot and a dunghill. Goodbye.