

# Bloodletting

**Bloodletting** is the collection of a small amount of blood to treat or prevent a disease. The technique was based on the idea of ancient medicine that a patient's health is related to the balance of body fluids. The introduction of this technique is often attributed to Galen, who described and used the method, though it has been practiced in Mesopotamia or Egypt. The use of this technique perservered for more than 2000 years until the end of the 19th century. From the point of view of modern medicine, the method is suitable only in a few cases and will harm the patient in all others.

Currently, the method is indicated for secondary polyglobulia , disease states caused by an increased number of erythrocytes and some types of cutaneous porphyria.

## Historical significance

Before the discovery of vasodilators, the method was successfully used in the treatment of sudden heart failure. When the left ventricle fails to draw blood from the pulmonary circulation and pump it into the systemic, blood accumulates under increased pressure in the pulmonary circulation, fluid seeps into the alveoli, fills them, and the patient "drowns" in his own body fluid. Taking a few deciliters of blood lowers blood pressure, even in the pulmonary circulation, and the patient can be significantly relieved within tens of minutes. <sup>[1]</sup>

## Links

### Related articles

- Venipuncture
- Hemochromatosis

### References

1. ČIERNIK, Matej. Smutné omyly medicíny. Objective Source E- Learning [online]. Praha, 12.10.2011 [cit. 2012-05-14]. Dostupné z: <http://www.osel.cz/5925-smutne-omyly-mediciny.html>