

The medical history of the civil war (1861-1865)



When most people think of the civil war they think about the long battles fought and the treacherous conditions that were lived through, but usually no thought goes to a large part of it. The surgeons and doctors that worked in harsh conditions with ineffective medicines to save the lives they could.

In the four years that the civil war was fought around 625,000 soldiers died, but only a third of that number died from actual enemy wounds. The rest died from disease and infection easily spread in the bad conditions people lived in. It would have made a big difference if doctors and surgeons of that time had anything close to modern medicines.

With conditions many people died from infections on small wounds that doctors did not know how to cure, for example someone could

fall and stab their hand on a rock and it might kill them

Amputation. In the time period of the civil war there were not many medicines to help with infections and illnesses so a doctor's main course of treatment was to amputate the person's limb that was infected and to get them a prosthetic. Because of this a large portion of the governments spendings after the war were used to buy veterans prosthetics.