



Battling Disease: U.S.-Mexican War Technology

During the U.S.-Mexican War, more soldiers died from disease than from battle wounds. Approximately 70% of deaths were due to disease.

Dr. Madison Mills, Assistant Surgeon of the U.S. Army, cared for the wounded at Palo Alto. Dr. Mills went on to become the Major Surgeon for the U.S. Army.

During the U.S.-Mexican War, Dr. Mills saw four main health threats to the soldiers.

POOR DRINKING WATER

Would you drink water from your trash can or your bathtub? Soldiers at Fort Brown got their drinking water from the Rio Grande. However, the river was also used as a bathroom and as a garbage dump.

Dr. Mills says: Go to the bathroom downstream from where you get your drinking water!

GARBAGE

Do you throw your garbage behind your house? Soldiers did not always dispose of trash properly and trash was often found near their campsite.

Dr. Mills says: Burn or bury your garbage far away from your tent!

MOSQUITOES

Mosquitoes were a major pest. Many army doctors suspected that mosquitoes spread diseases as well. To protect themselves, soldiers used lard and cactus juice as bug spray.

Dr. Mills says: Keep mosquitoes away!

POOR PERSONAL HYGIENE

Another health threat was poor personal hygiene. U.S. Army regulations stated that soldiers must wash their hands and face daily, their feet twice a week, and take a bath at least once a week. Furthermore, soldiers were to change their underwear three times a week.

Dr. Mills says: Take a bath now and then!

