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# Committed to Providing Medical Information: Merck and The Merck Manuals

In 1899, the American drug manufacturer Merck & Co. first published a small book titled *Merck's Manual of the Materia Medica*. It was meant as an aid to physicians and pharmacists, reminding doctors that "Memory is treacherous." Compact in size, easy to use, and comprehensive, *The Merck Manual* (as it was later known) became a favorite of those involved in medical care and others in need of a medical reference. Even Albert Schweitzer carried a copy to Africa in 1913, and Admiral Byrd carried a copy to the South Pole in 1929.

By the 1980s, the book had become the world's largest selling medical text and was translated into more than a dozen languages. While the name of the parent company has changed somewhat over the years, the book's name has remained constant, known officially as *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* but usually referred to as *The Merck Manual* and sometimes "The Merck."

In 1990, the editors of *The Merck Manual* introduced *The Merck Manual of Geriatrics*. This new book quickly became the best-selling textbook of geriatric medicine, providing specific and comprehensive information on the care of older people. The 3rd edition was published in five languages.

In 1997, *The Merck Manual of Medical Information—Home Edition* was published. In this revolutionary book, the editors translated the complex medical information in *The Merck Manual* into plain language, producing a book meant for all those people interested in medical care who did not have a medical degree. The book received critical acclaim and sold over 2 million copies. *The Second Home Edition* was released in 2003. Merck's commitment to providing comprehensive, understandable medical information to all people continued with *The Merck Manual Home Health Handbook*, published in 2009.

*The Merck Manual of Health & Aging*, published in 2004, continued Merck's commitment to education and geriatric care, providing information on aging and the care of older people in words understandable by the lay public.

In 2008, *The Merck Manual of Patient Symptoms* was introduced to complement *The Merck Manual* and was intended to help newcomers to clinical diagnosis approach patients who present with certain common symptoms.

As part of its commitment to ensuring that all who need and want medical information can get it, Merck provides the content of these Merck Manuals on the web for free ([www.merckmanuals.com](http://www.merckmanuals.com)). Registration is not required, and use is unlimited. The web publications are continuously updated to ensure that the information is as up-to-date as possible.

Merck also supports the community of chemists and others with the need to know about chemical compounds with *The Merck Index*. First published in 1889, this publication actually predates *The Merck Manual* and is the most widely used text of its kind. *The Merck Veterinary Manual* was first published in 1955. It provides information on the health care of animals and is the preeminent text in its field.

Merck & Co., Inc., is one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. Merck is committed to providing excellent medical information and, as part of that effort, continues to proudly provide all of The Merck Manuals as a service to the community.