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One of the greatest achievements of 20th-century medicine was the global eradication of smallpox.

Smallpox is caused by the variola virus and is most often transmitted by inhaling the virus.

The first attempts to control the disease used a technique known as variolation.

However, it was the discovery of vaccination by Edward Jenner in 1796 which marked a major step forward in controlling the disease.

Further advances were made in the 1920s with the development of dried vaccines in France and the Netherlands.

In 1966, the WHO set a ten-year goal for the eradication of smallpox worldwide.

By 1979, the WHO could formally declare smallpox eradicated worldwide.

Smallpox has a number of unique characteristics which made its eradication possible.

Although smallpox has ceased to kill, it remains a potential danger to humanity.