The origins of smallpox are lost to history.

Scientists and historians have several competing ideas. Some argue the origins are as recent as the 1500s CE.

Others say there is evidence of smallpox going back 3,000 years.

Yet others propose that it could go back to the advent of agriculture, as far back as 10,000 BCE.
When they arrived, they brought smallpox with them. The disease further contributed to the devastation of Native populations.
EARLY ON, PEOPLE OBSERVED THAT THOSE WHO WERE ALREADY INFECTED AND RECOVERED FROM SMALLPOX DIDN'T GET REINFECTED.

THAT OBSERVATION PROVIDED A CLUE FOR WAYS TO PREVENT INFECTION.

LONG BEFORE SCIENTISTS KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT THE HUMAN IMMUNE SYSTEM AND HOW IMMUNITY TO A DISEASE DEVELOPS...

...PEOPLE LOOKED FOR WAYS TO PREVENT SMALLPOX INFECTIONS.
In China and India, healers ground up scabs from people who survived smallpox. They then blew the powder in patients’ nostrils. This was called inoculation.
Inoculation was practiced across Asia and many parts of Africa...

Eventually, this practice made its way to the Ottoman Empire.

It caught the attention of Lady Mary Montagu, an English woman and wife of a diplomat.
Lady Montagu was smart and spirited.

Among other things, she was a talented writer, and she nearly died of smallpox.

Lady Montagu admired the scar-free skin of the local people. When she discovered how they avoided smallpox...

...she was eager to share the news.

Fluid and pus from smallpox pustules may have been scratched into an uninfected person's skin. These procedures appeared to protect people from getting smallpox...

Lady Montagu wrote to her acquaintance, who had acquired smallpox. Even two to four weeks, these simples indicated successful recovery and...

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
INOCULATIONS SAVE LIVES, BUT THERE ARE RISKS INVOLVED AS WELL.

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, DEAR.

INOCULATED INDIVIDUALS SOMETIMES DEVELOPED A MILD FORM OF THE DISEASE.

RARELY, PEOPLE DIED.
However, smallpox was such a frightening and deadly disease...

...people were willing to take the risk and inhale scab dust or be inoculated with fluid and pus from pustules.

There was a remote chance they could start a pandemic.
IN THE 1700s, A NEW INNOVATION WAS INTRODUCED. INSTEAD OF USING SCABS AND PUSTULES FROM SMALLPOX...

...A PHYSICIAN, EDWARD JENNER, USED PUSTULES FROM A DISEASE CALLED COWPOX.

IN COWPOX, A NEW INNOVATION WAS INTRODUCED. INSTEAD OF USING SCABS AND PUSTULES FROM SMALLPOX...

COWPOX IS SIMILAR TO SMALLPOX BUT THE DISEASE IT CAUSES IS FAR MORE MILD. TRAINING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM TO FIGHT USING THIS RELATED BUT MILD VIRUS IS CALLED VACCINATION.
In 1947, New York City began large-scale vaccination efforts. Thanks to the success of vaccination, smallpox was eradicated.

With vaccination, the end of smallpox was in sight.

Governments around the world looked to vaccines to end this terrible disease.

No cases of naturally occurring smallpox have happened since 1977.

The end.