

As far back as ancient Greece and Roman time, the importance of cleanliness and proper hygiene was recognized in the civilized world. The connection with health and wellness has always been there. Proper maintenance of your health and cleanliness helps ensure a steady defense against disease and illness.

Where did the name Hygia come from?

The name, pronounced Hi-je'-ah, comes from the Greek word for healthy – hygies. Hygia, also known as Hygeia, is the Greek goddess who watches over the health and wellness of man. She was part of the triad of healing gods in conjunction with Apollo and Asklepios.

Hygia personified cleanliness and hygiene as the proper route to your overall health. A routine maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene therefore granted her continued protection.

Hygia was also known to aid in cleaning of one's household. Her guidelines for a balanced daily routine were said to ensure a healthy, happy home to all who followed her ways. It was said that following her helped ensure the prevention of sickness and a continuation of good health. Keeping a clean home thereby invoked her protection.

Where did the Goddess Hygieia come from?

Her father was Asclepius, the God of medicine and healing; her mother was Epione, the Goddess of soothing pain. They were considered lesser gods which arrived in the ancient world, after the original twelve major deities, nine Muses and three Fates.

Worshippers first began praising the goddess of health and cleanliness around 420 BCE, when a plague swept across Greece. Worshippers then spread their word and belief and Hygia became well-known and worshiped across Ancient Rome for the next century.

Her Association to Cleanliness and Health

An interesting factoid is that the name Hygia evolved into the modern term for keeping clean – hygiene. The Hippocratic Oath originally invoked the triad of healing gods mentioned above; records have the Oath of Hippocrates starting with the statement “*I swear by Apollo, the healer, Asklepios, Hygieia, and Panakeia, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgement, the following Oath and agreement*”. Thus a person swearing by this oath would do their best, within their ability, to ensure proper health, hygiene and cleanliness.

Hygia was often found with a pet snake wrapped around her arm. This snake is the same one found wrapped around the rod of Asclepius as the symbol for medicine. A bowl she used has become the symbol for pharmacy.