

Henrietta Lacks

“When I go to the doctor for checkups, I always say my mother was HeLa. They get all excited, tell me stuff like how her cells helped make my blood pressure medicines and anti-depression pills . . . but they never explain more than saying your mother was on the moon, she’s been in nuclear bombs, and made that polio vaccine.”

-Deborah Lacks, Henrietta’s daughter

Henrietta Lacks was an African American woman, who lived from 1920-1951, whose cells have made a major impact on medical advances such as the polio vaccine.
Learn more about her in this monthly patch!

Complete 3-Daisy, 4-Brownie, 5-Junior, 6-Cadette,
and 7-Senior/Ambassador steps to earn your patch.

All monthly patches are custom designed patches. Once we get the final number of patches after the 15th of each month, we place an order. Patches take about a month to create and then we mail them to you. You will get a confirmation email once the patches are headed your way.

Order patch on-line by June 15, 2020 at www.getyourgirlpower.org

Discover

1. Take just 4 minutes to watch this extremely educational video all about HeLa cells and the women they came from, Henrietta Lacks. Then discuss with your troop 2 important takeaways from the video.

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-immortal-cells-of-henrietta-lacks-robin-bulleri#watch>

2. In the 1950’s when the cells were taken from Henrietta, it wasn’t protocol that researchers and scientists got permission from the patient before taking a sample of DNA.

Henrietta's family did not find out until years later that her cells were used to make many medical advances. Do you think this is right or wrong? Another aspect to consider is that **Henrietta's family was very poor and could not afford medical insurance, do you think they should have gotten money for Henrietta's cells since they helped so many people and scientists were making money off the vaccines they created through the help of the HeLa cells? Discuss with your troop. How do you think this made Henrietta's family feel?**

3. Something interesting about the HeLa cells is that they went to space! In the 1960s, they were rocketed into space with the second Russian satellite ever to be put into orbit. HeLa cells also were sent with the first humans to go into space, where scientists discovered HeLa cells divided even more quickly in zero gravity. Learn more about space in the 1960s. Do you know what other monthly patch we did this year that discussed space? What do you find most interesting about the HeLa cells? What do you find interesting about space? Discuss with your troop.

4. Henrietta was born in 1920 in Roanoke, Virginia. Discover **what life was like in the 1920's** and research what it was like in Virginia. How was life for African Americans at that time in **history. How was life in the 1950's, when Henrietta passed away, for African Americans? Discuss with your troop what Henrietta's life must have been like.**

Connect

5. Did you know there was a movie made about Henrietta Lacks starring Oprah on HBO? If you are in high school check out this movie; however, definitely get permission from your parents first as this movie is rated TV-MA. Another option if this movie may be too mature for your viewing, **is to check out some of Oprah's content. She has a great podcast** called Super Soul Conversations with some very inspirational guests, as well as some amazing articles with her advice for young girls.

6. This monthly patch ties in perfectly with the Senior **Girl Scout Women's Health badge**. Do some research about why this topic might tie in well with this badge and complete the **first step for the Women's Health badge**.

1. Investigate tests that help women stay healthy

For extra bonus points you could complete the whole badge, below is a link to the badge requirements.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6ggdIXxWNO-Nk9DVUtwcG56aW8/view>

7. **Henrietta's immortal cells were called HeLa; which was the researcher's method of using the first two letters of the patient's first and last name. What would your cells be named?** You can use the same method of using your name or come up with something original. What would they look like? Draw a picture, using your imagination, of what your cells might look like. Rainbow colored? Go for it! Then decide what your cells could do to **make an impact on the world. Henrietta's cells helped develop a vaccine for polio!** Yours could help cure a disease or maybe it could be a vaccine to make people nicer! Use your imagination, you can be as literal or make believe as you want.

8. Did you know the people in the field that makes these medical advances, such as vaccines for polio and treatments for cancer, are called biomedical engineers? Have you heard of this field of study before? Learn more about biomedical engineering as well as other lesser known STEM fields. You never know, they could spark a new career path for you!

Take Action

9. **The book that made Henrietta's story well known is called the Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks** by Rebecca Skloot. Although this book is a biography, not an autobiography; meaning that Henrietta did not write the book about her life herself. Write an autobiography! Write about your life. Take this opportunity to write about your life right now and the unusual time the world is experiencing due to the COVID-19 concerns. What are you doing to keep busy during this time? Write about it and document your day to look back on years later!

10. Get the word out **about a women's health topic.** (p.s. Seniors this is the last step for **the Women's Health badge**) **OR get the word out about a topic that affects women.** Such as, not enough women in STEM careers, equal pay for women, body image issues, etc.. Come up with a plan to educate others on your cause! Brainstorm with your friends how you can help make a difference pertaining to your chosen topic.