**Asclepius: God of Medicine**

**POWERPOINT NOTES**

1. In ancient Greece, Asclepius was the God of healing and medicine. Son of Apollo, Asclepius was born in Epidaurus (in the Peloponnese) and he was raised by the Centaur Chiron, who instructed him in the art of medicine.
2. The god of medicine is always depicted as a middle-aged man with a beard, dressed with a long cloak (himation), carrying a snake-entwined rod, which nowadays is still the symbol of medicine. This symbol can be seen on a doctors’ surgery in Jesmond, Newcastle.
3. Asclepius was worshipped in sanctuaries: an important one was in Epidaurus (the city where, according to the myth, Asclepius was born). There was also a very big theatre at this sanctuary. From there, the cult of Asclepius spread all over Greece, including the colonies: we find Asklepieia (Sanctuaries to Asclepius) in Athens and other cities of Greece, on the islands, in Southern Italy, in Sicily, in Crete and in even on small islands, like Kos. This last island is very important for medicine because here Hippocrates the so called ‘father of medicine’ was born.
4. When patients went to Asclepius’ sanctuary, they had to purify themselves before entering the holy part of the temple. The practice of purification included several baths in water (a sanctuary of Asclepius was always close to water) and not eating some kind of foods. After this purification, the patients could enter the holy space to spend the night. While they were asleep, Asclepius, through a dream, cured them or gave them an idea of how to get better. This practice was called ‘incubation’. Thousands of inscriptions from Asklepieia have been found and give information about ‘holy healings’.
5. After they got better, patients could leave the sanctuary; in order to thank the god, they used to offer him gifts, which are called “ex-voto”. These ex-voto were often made of clay and they used to reproduce the part of the body that the god cured: archaeologists find a lot of anatomical parts in the Asklepieia. The most common ex-voto were: eyes, noses, ears, feet, legs and arms.

**Now try making a votive offering**