



PLAGUE AND PESTILENCE

DISEASES OF FANTASY AND REALITY

“We were too slow to act. My mind cannot help dwelling upon our accursed mistakes. Such ill conduct at the onset argues gross ignorance of the most common and obvious tenets of our faith, and gives us anxious forebodings for the future. I have lost some of those I valued most, as though the plague sought to humble and shame my soul. Nothing can excuse this madness and ignorance. So many lives thrown away. Our inaction murdered them as much as if we had cut their throats.”

—Deliah Elisten, Former Cleric of Sarenrae, *An Account of the Ridwan Ruin*

Thousands of diseases exist in the world. Most are relatively harmless, causing mild discomfort and inconvenience.

Some, however, present a dire threat to those exposed, stealing life as surely as any blade or spell. Diseases stem from numerous sources, though most can be tracked back to filthy conditions, poor ventilation, lack of clean water, parasites, or other pollutants. They proliferate in crowded areas where infection spreads quickly from person to person. In some communities, the availability of herbal medicine, properly prepared food, clean living conditions, and healing magic stave off the bulk of these maladies. Left unchecked, though, a disease can spread into a deadly plague, harvesting countless lives under a silent, dreadful scythe.

Magic and miracle cures don't mean an end to disease. Even in a fantasy world, the afflictions of the flesh run rampant, and fears of pestilence and plague terrify mortals. What follows is an exploration of how diseases affect the people of Golarion—and potentially any other fantasy world—as well as a look at methods of treating illness and a host of new afflictions.

PLAGUES IN FANTASY

Although healing magic greatly aids the treatment of diseases, it does little to make the threat of natural pestilence less terrifying. If both mundane and magical maladies can threaten bands of adventurers—who often count skilled healers among their number—the common man proves even more vulnerable, typically lacking access to divine magic or coin to purchase it. As such, fear of sickness torments everyday folk just as it would have distressed the medieval peoples of the real world.

Pestilence has a variety of effects on typical fantasy communities. The degree of these afflictions are classified in order of increasing scale as outbreak (an occurrence of a disease affecting a small group of people), epidemic (a disease affecting numerous people someplace it is not already prevalent), and pandemic (an affliction spreading across large regions—such as countries, nations, or entire worlds—for long periods of time).

Outbreak

Infectious diseases have existed since before the first cities were founded, and people living in close-packed communities only made their spread easier. When a disease spreads outside a limited group, affecting a larger populace for an extended period of time, it becomes an outbreak.

A disease present at all times is considered endemic. For example, sleeping sickness is endemic in many tropical areas but is not considered an outbreak until it extends beyond its endemic region.

When dealing with an outbreak, clerics and healers typically act to contain or quarantine the disease as quickly as possible, lest it spread through the populace. The spread

of any disease depends entirely on its nature, and this nature ultimately determines how quickly it kills. An airborne disease spreads from person to person and can infect large numbers very quickly, as one victim passes it on by coughing, sneezing, sharing food and drink, or sleeping in the same room as others. Diseases that travel through water ride downstream to infect nearby villages or passersby who can then continue to transmit the disease to the next water source with their bodily fluids. This means of infection often occurs when human waste infects freshwater wells, spreading the disease to the surrounding populace.

In smaller communities, the rarity of healing magic can devastate the population and, in the worst-case scenario, wipe an entire village from the map. In such cases, even low-level clerics might be able to stem the source of the disease, halting its progress or eliminating it entirely. For example, where a local well has been tainted with refuse, a cleric could slow a disease's progress with *purify food and drink* spells and by directing the villagers to discontinue using it. Further, given a small population, a cleric's *create water* spell provides an excellent alternative fresh water source.

Epidemic

While an outbreak focuses on one locale, an epidemic affects a more general area, such as a city, feudal state, or geographical region, for a sustained period of time. In game terms, it's easiest to treat districts of a city as separate small villages when it comes to the spread of disease, with the only major differences being more people coming and going in an urban area, where the risk of spreading an infection increases. Older and poorer districts of a city, or those near contaminated water, generally succumb to disease first.

To this end, many city leaders might maintain protocols ensuring the population's safety in the event of an epidemic-level plague. In this situation, each district holds responsibility for its inhabitants, and temples and clerics within the district assist residents. Further, when a district becomes contaminated, quarantines enforced by city guards or militia might go into effect. Barricades and checkpoints prevent any movement in or out of the area. Those caught attempting escape are forcibly returned to the quarantine zone, or perhaps even slain outright if the situation is dire enough. Even city nobles, fearing infection, typically seal off their estates to outsiders and post guards at the gates with orders to slay anyone attempting to enter the grounds without permission.

When faced with an epidemic, many city leaders issue summonses throughout the city to anyone possessing the means to combat and treat the disease, including adventurers passing through. Clerics and paladins are the most common targets for impressment. Herbalists, alchemists, rangers, druids, and even wizards capable of summoning extraplanar creatures with healing magic

(such as astral devas or planetars) are also sought out and press-ganged into the city's service.

Even with magic on the residents' side, though, common practices still beg observance. The most important practice remains cleanliness, for if the victim stays in a contagious environment, not only might his condition continue but, worse, he might contract other diseases. In the worst instances, spells such as *purify food and drink* or *create water* could be more valuable than *cure disease* or *restoration*, which might restore some vitality to the victim but do nothing to prevent him from catching the disease again.

Pandemic

Beyond the scope of an epidemic, a pandemic is a disease gone rampant, infecting entire countries, continents, or even worlds in a spiral of misery that lingers for months or years. Without intervention, such a disease can wipe out entire populations. Pandemics often follow a pattern of remission and resurgence with widespread community outbreaks rippling through a region in intervals of months or whole generations between waves.

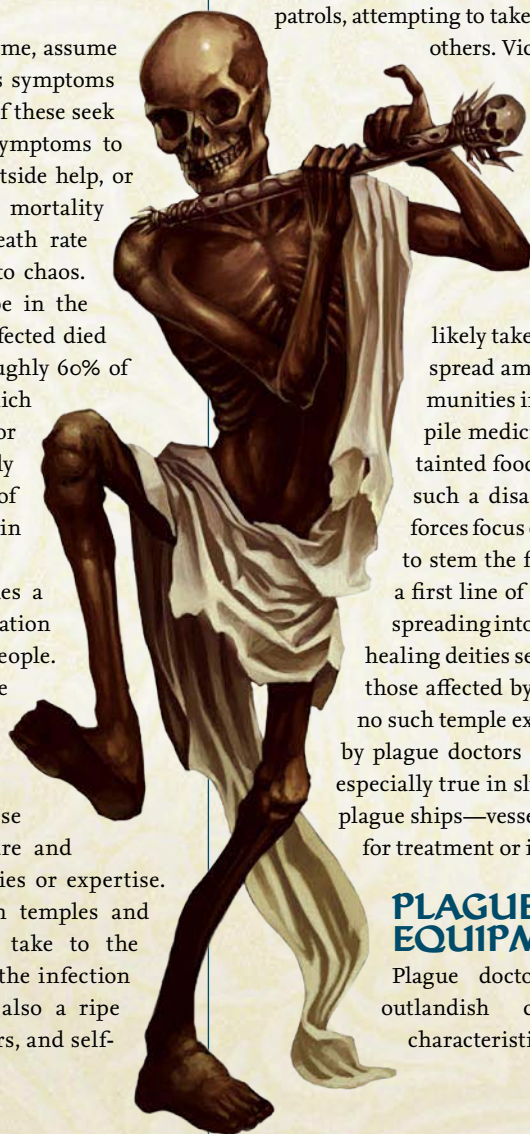
When running a pandemic in your game, assume that roughly 30% of a population shows symptoms of the disease. Unfortunately, only half of these seek medical care, often attributing their symptoms to those of common ailments, refusing outside help, or consigning themselves to death. While mortality rates for pandemics range wildly a death rate of 2–3% is plenty to plunge a nation into chaos. When the Black Death wracked Europe in the 13th century, four out of five of those infected died within 8 days, costing the continent roughly 60% of its population (75 million people, of which 50 million came from Europe). Slow or ineffective responses to the crisis only increases the rate, as wave after wave of transmission entrenches the disease within the population.

A pandemic-level disease that reaches a city the size of Korsova (with a population around 18,000) could claim at least 500 people. In such a case, many nobles might flee to rural estates, while the city enacts martial law in an attempt to maintain order. The remaining businesses and professionals who do not flee likely close shop rather than risk further exposure and looting, leaving the city without supplies or expertise. Clerics and other relief workers from temples and assorted humanitarian organizations take to the streets, attempting to stem the flow of the infection among the populace. Pandemics are also a ripe opportunity for entrepreneurs, hucksters, and self-

proclaimed “plague doctors” who tout their own expertise and miracle cures, with varying levels of qualification and results. Throughout the city, officials desperately attempt to organize burial details as bodies mount and further contribute to infection. Funeral pyres burn night and day in the hope of cleaning the air. Meanwhile, plague doctors prescribe the use of strong-scented herbs, flowers, smoking tobaccos, and any other substances that give off strong odors—such as pepper, hops, or frankincense—in the belief that such remedies stave off disease. In the best-organized communities, citizens band together, forming coalitions to limit the spread of infection, some offering to guard quarantined areas while others see to the needs of their affected neighbors.

Quarantines place heavy burdens on the populace. Limiting the movement of people, goods, and services into and out of areas where an outbreak has occurred is an extremely difficult task. Families with loved ones in a quarantined region try to offer aid. Businesses or desperate bandits with significant interests in a region run blockades or circumvent border patrols, attempting to take advantage of the hardships of others. Victims caught within a quarantine zone try escaping, their desire to survive overriding any concern for the welfare of their neighbors.

In the event that a city knows a pandemic-level disease has infected its neighboring lands, the city likely takes measures to circumvent the spread among the populace. Wise communities in that situation quickly stockpile medicines, curative magic, and untainted food and water in anticipation of such a disaster, while the city's martial forces focus on blockades and checkpoints to stem the flow of the disease, providing a first line of defense against the infection spreading into the city. Temples dedicated to healing deities set up lazarettos—hospitals for those affected by a disease. In districts where no such temple exists, sick wards administered by plague doctors tend to the infected. This is especially true in slums, quarantine zones, or on plague ships—vessels where the sick are brought for treatment or isolation.



PLAGUE DOCTOR EQUIPMENT

Plague doctors dress in intimidating, outlandish clothing featuring three characteristic items: a heavy leather

tunic, a doctor's mask, and a wand of misery. In addition to these items, healers forced to combat plagues make use of numerous other implements and remedies.

Doctor's Mask: Resembling the head of a heron and featuring slits that allow its wearer to breathe, this black, goggle-eyed mask of leather and cloth covers the entire head and shoulders, acting as a primitive gas mask filled with herbs meant to purify the senses and ward off disease. This mask grants its user a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist foul smells (like a *stinking cloud* spell or a troglodyte's stench) and inhaled diseases.

Doctor's Outfit: The heavy leather tunic and supple gloves are treated with special oils to resist disease, yet still provide wearers with the flexibility to perform fine manipulation. The tunic covers the entire body from neck to foot, while the slick black gloves reach from the fingers to the upper arms. Any creature wearing this outfit gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist contact diseases.

Surgeons' Tools: Including a bone saw, iron for cauterization, various delicate knives, and iron tongs, these specialized tools are used to treat a variety of wounds. When purchased to supplement the contents of a healer's kit, they raise the kit's bonus to a +3 circumstance bonus on Heal checks.

Thurible: This vessel is for burning incense, oils, or aromatic herbs used to mask foul odors and purify the air. When filled with coal and common herbs worth 2 sp, these miniature braziers fill an area 30 feet in diameter with light smoke for 1 hour. Any creature in the area of this smoke gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves to resist inhaled diseases.

Wand of Misery: This simply carved but sturdy 3-foot-long wooden cane is used to scrutinize plague victims. The wand permits the plague doctor to determine a patient's condition, diagnosing his maladies through his reactions to various pokes and prods, often opening infected sores and wounds for inspection. These tools have the same statistics as clubs.

Plague Doctor Equipment

Item	Cost	Weight
Doctor's mask	50 gp	2 lb
Doctor's outfit	150 gp	6 lb
Surgeons' tools	20 gp	5 lb
Thurible	50 gp	3 lb
Wand of misery	5 gp	1 lb

HERBAL REMEDIES

Healers have long extolled the use of various plants and herbal concoctions in treating all manner of ailments. GMs who wish to incorporate healing herbs into their games might allow characters with ranks in Heal and Survival

REAL WORLD PLAGUES

Researching and writing "Seven Days to the Grave" has been a morbidly fascinating and, at times, socially terrifying experience. While we often think of plagues as artifacts of the Dark Ages, unfortunately modern medicine has not advanced to the point that we can consign the term to the distant past.

Bubonic Plague: Although no longer of pandemic status and eminently treatable, bubonic fever—a disease characterized by swelling of the lymph nodes, bleeding under the skin, weakness and/or a variety of respiratory symptoms—has not been eradicated. At its height in the 1300s, this disease may have been responsible for the deaths of more than 100 million people. If those killed by the plague in those years were laid head to toe, one could walk around the world more than four and a half times on the bodies. A handful of people still die of bubonic fever every year.

HIV and AIDS: HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) is a modern pandemic, a sexually transmitted disease that attacks the immune system, eventually leading to a failure of the body's defenses and opportunistic infections known as AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). An estimated 25 million people died of AIDS between the years of 1981 and 2006 (advert.org), enough bodies to pave a path from Seattle to Miami. This sexually transmitted disease is carried and spread by both genders, regardless of sexual preference, and there is no known cure.

Influenza: More commonly known as the flu, new strains of influenza infrequently jump the species gap from animal hosts to humans. From 1918 to 1920, the Spanish Flu killed from 50 to 100 million people worldwide, creating enough bodies to stretch from London to Tokyo. The widely publicized Asian bird flu serves as a modern example of a new strain of influenza adapting to affect the human population.

More details on modern diseases of all types can be found at the U.S. Center for Disease Control (cdc.gov) and the European Center for Disease Control and Prevention (ecdc.eu.int).

—Wes Schneider

to spend a day in the wilderness searching for helpful healing plants. Making a DC 15 Survival check results in the discovery of a useful bundle of herbs. The character finds another bundle for every 2 points by which the check exceeds 15. Using such an herb grants the healer a +1 circumstance bonus on a Heal check made to treat a disease.

Here are but a few widely known herbal remedies, useful for describing what's in a healer's bag or what simmers within an alchemist's concoctions.

Aloe: This fleshy-leafed flowering plant treats wounds and burns. If brewed as tea, it acts as a laxative. If made into an oil, its uses include negating the itching caused by biting insects.

Anise: This flowering, leafy coastal plant is best known for its seeds, which act as antacids and further aid in

digestion. If made into an oil, it repels lice and treats high fevers and colds. If the leaves of this plant are brewed into a tea, they are especially effective in soothing coughing fits.

Belladonna: This leafy berry plant is very poisonous. If brewed properly, however, it cures nervous disorders. The berries of this plant are also used to cure maladies afflicting the eyes.

Garlic: This bulbous plant is traditionally rumored to ward off vampires. If eaten raw, it is especially effective in killing parasites. If brewed as a tea, made into soup, or cooked, it also aids in soothing coughs and detoxifying blood conditions.

Lavender: This shrub-like flowering plant proves effective as an antiseptic and anti-inflammatory agent. If made into an oil, it treats insect bites and soothes headaches.

Rose: This flowering thorny bush is most renowned for its petals. When brewed as a tea, the petals treat colds and fevers.

Witch Hazel: This leafy, flowering, shrub-like tree heals external sores, bruises, and swelling once rendered into a salve. Witch hazel oil is an antioxidant and astringent.

DISEASES

The world is rife with diseases. Some thrive in relatively localized regions and are familiar to Golarion's healers, while new afflictions—maladies from the edges of the map—sometimes steal into the heart of the civilized world. Many of the following new diseases take inspiration from real-world maladies and compliment those presented in the DMG.

Anthrakitis: This disease spreads through particles exuded from the decomposing corpses of infected animals. Infective particles can survive in the soil for decades or even centuries. The disease typically occurs when grazing mammals ingest or breathe the spores while eating ground vegetation. Anthrakitis causes a wide variety of symptoms as it attacks the skin, digestive system, or respiratory system; symptoms include fatigue, difficulty breathing, ulcers, loss of appetite, and nausea.

Any victim infected with anthrakitis can also spread the disease. Those who come into contact with a victim must save versus the disease or become infected themselves. The bodies of those killed by anthrakitis are also infectious and remain so until destroyed.

Bubonic Plague: Infected vermin and parasites spread this disease, also known as Daemon's Touch or the Black Death, through their bites. Once contracted, the disease spreads quickly, polluting the victim's body with toxins. As the disease reaches the lymph nodes, the victim suffers extreme inflammation of glands, and his skin might take on a black pallor. Symptoms include fever, headaches, nausea, fatigue, and swelling of the lymph nodes (called buboes) on the neck, underarms, and inner thigh areas,

and eventually bleeding beneath the skin. A victim who takes any Constitution damage from the disease must immediately make a successful Fortitude save or become fatigued until all his Constitution damage is healed. Each time a victim takes 2 points of Constitution damage from Black Death, he also takes 1 point of Charisma damage.

Bonecrusher Fever: Spread by mosquitoes and other infected insects in tropical climes, the moniker for bonecrusher fever—also called dengue fever—comes from the sensation sufferers experience, described as a great force squeezing their bones from within. Those suffering from bonecrusher fever endure severe headaches, high fevers, and a distinctive rash characterized by bright red dots caused by capillaries under their skin hemorrhaging. The rash appears first on the lower limbs and the chest, spreading to cover the entire body in severe cases.

Enteric Fever: Enteric fever, also known as typhoid fever in temperate climates, breeds within contaminated foods, especially raw or undercooked meats. Symptoms include high fever, profuse sweating, and nausea. As the disease progresses, enteric fever victims become sickened and suffer from severe headaches, exhaustion, and abdominal pain, as rose-colored spots appear on the chest and abdominal areas. At that point, the victim is prone to dehydration and falls into bouts of delirium and nervous shakes.

Leprosy: Terrifyingly common throughout Qadira, leprosy is spread by victims of the disease through direct—even casual—contact. Leprosy results in skin lesions, extreme nasal congestion, and wounds that do not heal. A highly visible malady, leprosy can permanently disfigure those who don't receive magical aid. If left untreated, the victim develops sores and becomes easily fatigued. While leprosy can prove difficult to contract, few overcome the disease once infected. When exposed to leprosy, a character must make a DC 12 Fortitude save to resist the disease. If he fails, once the affliction's incubation time passes and symptoms begin showing, the save to recover from the malady increases to DC 20. Suffering from a slow deterioration, particularly hardy lepers can remain quite active for years after first exhibiting signs of the disease.

Sleeping Sickness: A well-known illness endemic throughout the Sodden Lands and the Mwangi Expanse, this disease is spread by infected flying insects injecting tiny parasites into the victim's bloodstream, inducing fever, headache, joint pain, swelling of the neck and glands, and most notably, fatigue. The disease gradually infects the brain, causing confusion and reduced coordination as the victim loses all track of time, suffering bouts of insomnia and exhaustion. Anytime a victim takes ability score damage from this affliction he is also fatigued for the next day.

A detoxifying brew consisting of garlic, onions, and parsley grants the drinker a +5 bonus to his next saving



New Diseases

Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
Anthrakitis	Contact, Inhaled, or Ingested	20	1d6 days	1d8 Con
Bubonic Plague	Injury	17	1 day	1d4 Con and Cha damage*
Bonecrusher Fever	Injury	12	1 week	1d4 Dex
Enteric Fever	Ingested	15	3 days	1d4 Str, 1d4 Con, sickened
Leprosy	Contact or Injury	12/20*	2d4 weeks	1d2 Cha
Sleeping Sickness	Injury	14	1d2 days	1d4 Wis, fatigue*
Tetanus	Injury	14	1d6 days	1d4 Dex, lockjaw*
Urgathoa's Breath	Inhaled	18	1d4 days	1d4 Str, 1d4 Con
Vorel's Phage	Contact or Ingested	20	1 day	1d4 Cha, 1d4 Con

*See description for further details.

throw against the disease. The most effective mundane treatment, though, is dosing the patient with arsenic (ingest DC 13; initial 1 Con, secondary 1d8 Con). If the patient survives this "treatment" there is a cumulative 30% chance that the disease is cured with each dose given.

Tetanus: This disease, also called "lockjaw" or "ironmaw," is typically introduced via deep wounds from contaminated objects like rusty metal. Tetanus victims become more and more prone to violent muscle spasms, splitting headaches, fever, and difficulty swallowing. Stiffness of the jaw is a common result of tetanus infection. Each time a victim takes Dexterity damage from tetanus, there is a 50% chance his jaw muscles stiffen—preventing speech, the casting of spells with verbal components, or even eating—for the next 24 hours.

Urgathoa's Breath: This disease, also known as tuberculosis in some regions, flourishes in unsanitary

conditions, places of stale air, and many humanoid cities. Symptoms include chest pain and a productive, prolonged, bloody cough. If left untreated, the disease quickly progresses, leading to high fever, chills, night sweats, appetite loss, pallor, and fatigue. While the disease can take years, even decades, to manifest, Urgathoa's cult has long possessed a faster, more virulent version that they often use to inspire fear of their festering goddess.

Vorel's Phage: A relatively new and still exceedingly rare malady, this hideous disease is found only in southern Varisia. The phage causes a painful and hideous outbreak of facial tumors and a sickening deterioration of the skin across the entire body, and also works on the minds of some, slowly driving them insane. This affliction has recently fallen into the hands of the Red Mantis and, through them, the cult of Urgathoa, making its destructive spread nearly inevitable.



ABADAR

MASTER OF THE FIRST VAULT

Abadar (AB-uh-dar) is a patient, calculating, and far-seeing deity who wishes to bring civilization to the frontiers, order to the wilds, and wealth to all who support the progression of law. He strikes a careful balance between good and evil, seeing benefits of both sides and refusing to endorse one or the other. His followers believe he is responsible for elevating the demihuman races from simple tribes to beings capable of creating huge cities. He puts words of diplomacy in the mouths of men, guides the pens of those who write laws, and steers coins into the hands of those who practice good commerce.