

The Bubonic Plague



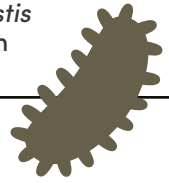
The bubonic plague is one of the most deadly diseases in human history.

Read the table below to learn about the bubonic plague. Then answer the questions on page 2.

<p>What is the bubonic plague?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bubonic plague is caused by bacteria called <i>Yersinia pestis</i>. • Victims develop high fever, chills, headaches, and discolored swelling called buboes. • Without antibiotics, the plague can be fatal within a week of the infection.
<p>How does the plague spread?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bubonic plague spreads through the bite of a flea infected with <i>Yersinia pestis</i>. • These fleas feed on rodents. Rodents often live near humans. • Fleas can easily pass between animals and people, spreading the plague to humans. • Unsanitary living conditions and the presence of animals make flea bites more likely.
<p>What was the Black Death of the 1300s CE?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most famous plague pandemic happened in the 1300s CE. • This event, called the Black Death, was possibly the most deadly event in human history. • The bubonic plague broke out somewhere in Asia around 1334 CE. • Long-distance trade in luxury items on the Silk Road spread the plague far and wide. • By 1347 CE, the bubonic plague spread across thousands of miles to Europe and Africa. • The combined death toll of the plague in the 1300s was 40 to 200 million people.
<p>Why were many human populations vulnerable to the plague in the 1300s CE?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life in the 1300s CE was unsanitary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Most people were farmers and lived close to animals that carried fleas. ◦ People lived in cramped homes and usually wore the same clothing daily. ◦ There was no running water, so people did not bathe or wash their clothes often. • Antibiotics did not exist yet, so the plague killed around half the people it infected.
<p>How does the plague affect people today?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients are still occasionally diagnosed with the bubonic plague in many countries. • The plague does not spread as quickly, thanks to better sanitation and clean water. • Modern medicines, like antibiotics, can treat the bubonic plague effectively. • Over 90% of bubonic plague patients recover within two weeks if they get antibiotics.

The Bubonic Plague

Yersinia pestis
bacterium



Part 1 Use the words below to fill in the blanks.

buboes • antibiotics • bacteria • Black Death • fleas • sanitation

The bubonic plague is a disease caused by _____ called *Yersinia pestis*. It spreads through the bites of infected _____ that usually feed on rodents. These parasites can jump from rodents to people and infect a human population, so poor _____ helps spread the disease. People with the plague suffer from high fevers and dark swellings called _____. Without modern medicine, the bubonic plague can be quite deadly. In the 1300s CE, millions of people died from the bubonic plague in an event known as the _____. But today, most people can survive the bubonic plague if they receive _____ in time.

Part 2 Answer the questions below.

1. How does the bubonic plague usually spread to humans?

2. Why was the bubonic plague so deadly in the “Black Death” of the 1300s CE?

3. How does the bubonic plague affect people today?

Part 3 Draw a line to match each Black Death cause to its effect.

BLACK DEATH CAUSE	
People in the 1300s CE traded across long distances.	●
Living conditions were very dirty in the 1300s CE.	●
Antibiotics did not exist in the 1300s CE.	●
Antibiotics treat the bubonic plague effectively.	●

EFFECT	
●	Most people survive the plague today.
●	Many people who caught the plague died from it.
●	Many homes had fleas that spread the plague.
●	The plague spread from Asia to Africa and Europe.