

Simpler Systems Options: Plague, Poison, & Madness

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Plagues:

A plague ravages the kingdom, setting the adventurers on a quest to find a cure. An adventurer emerges from an ancient tomb, unopened for centuries, and soon finds herself suffering from a wasting illness. A warlock offends some dark power and contracts a strange affliction that spreads whenever he casts spells. A simple outbreak might amount to little more than a small drain on party resources, curable by a casting of healing magics. A more complicated outbreak can form the basis of one or more adventures as characters search for a cure, stop the spread of

the disease, and deal with the consequences. A disease that does more than infect a few party members is primarily a plot device. The rules help describe the effects of the disease and how it can be cured, but the specifics of how a disease works aren't bound by a common set of rules. Diseases can affect any creature, and a given illness might or might not pass from one race or kind of creature to another. A plague might affect only constructs or undead, or sweep through a halfling neighborhood but leave other races untouched.

Diseases in the Campaign:

The diseases here illustrate the variety of ways disease can work in the game. Feel free to alter the saving throw DC's, incubation times, symptoms, and other characteristics of these diseases to suit your campaign.

Cackle Fever: This disease targets humanoids, although gnomes are strangely immune. While in the grips of this disease, victims frequently succumb to fits of mad laughter, giving the disease its common name and its morbid nickname: "the shrieks."

- Symptoms manifest 1d4 hours after infection and include fever and disorientation. The infected creature gains one level of exhaustion that can't be removed until the disease is cured. Any event that causes the infected creature great stress, including entering combat, taking damage, experiencing fear, or having a nightmare, forces the

creature to make a DC 13 Constitution save. On a failed save, the creature takes d10 psychic damage and becomes incapacitated with mad laughter for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the mad laughter and the incapacitated condition on a success. Any humanoid creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of an infected creature in the throes of mad laughter must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution save or also become infected with the disease. Once a creature succeeds on this save, it is immune to the mad

laughter of that particular infected creature for 24 hours. At the end of a nights rest, an infected creature can make a DC 13 Constitution save. On a successful save, the DC for this save and for the save to avoid an attack of mad laughter drops by 1d6. When the saving throw DC drops to 0, the creature recovers from the disease. A creature that fails three of these saving throws gains a randomly determined form of indefinite madness.

Cholera: Caused by tainted food and water. This disease causes severe diarrhea, fever, delirium, and dehydration.

- Make a DC 12 Constitution save two days after exposure. Failure inflicts two levels of exhaustion. Daily DC 14 Constitution saves. Lose two levels of exhaustion with each failure. Two successes overcome the disease. Exhaustion levels recover at a rate of one per day of rest.

Plague: This fast moving disease is feared for its fast spreading and deadly nature. It features blood spots on the skin, swollen lymph glands, fever/chills, diarrhea, and delirium.

- Each week in plague zone roll a DC 14 Constitution save with disadvantage or after three days, become incapacitated. After being infected, roll daily a DC 16 Constitution save with disadvantage. Each failure reduces your Constitution by d6. Death occurs when your Constitution drops to zero or less. You

overcome the plague after three successful saves. Regain one point of Constitution per day of rest.

Pox: Fever, muscle soreness, and boils all over the skin break out.

- A week after exposure make a DC 14 Constitution save. On a fail, you are sick for seven days, subtract d6 for each use of a skill, talent, or ability, and have minimal scaring. On a special failure, you are sick for twelve days, subtract d10 for each use of a skill, talent, or ability, and have moderate scaring.

Sewer Plague: Sewer plague is a generic term for a broad category of illnesses that incubate in sewers, refuse heaps, and stagnant swamps, and which are sometimes transmitted by creatures that dwell in those areas, such as rats and wretches.

- When a character is bitten by a creature that carries the disease, or when it comes into contact with filth or offal contaminated by the disease, the character must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution save or become infected. It takes 1d4 days for sewer plague's symptoms to manifest in an infected creature. Symptoms include fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion, and it regains only half the normal number of hit points from magic healing and a quarter of the hit points from finishing a nights rest. At the end of each nights rest, an infected creature must make a DC 11

Constitution save. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Sight Rot: This painful infection causes bleeding from the eyes and eventually blinds the victim.

- A beast or humanoid that drinks water tainted by sight rot must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become infected. One day after infection, the creature's vision starts to become blurry. The creature takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and ability checks that rely on sight. At the end of each night's rest after the symptoms appear, the penalty worsens by 1. When it reaches -5, the victim is blinded until its sight is restored by magic. Sight rot can be cured using a rare flower which grows in some swamps. Given an hour, a character who is skilled with alchemy can turn the flower into one dose of ointment. Applied to the eyes before a night's rest, one dose of it prevents the

disease from worsening after that rest. After three doses, the ointment cures the disease entirely.

Swamp Fever: This incapacitating fever is bred in swampy, humid, warm or hot environments.

- Make a DC 15 Constitution save three days after exposure. On a fail lose d6 Strength to a minimum 5 and movement rates are halved. After three days make a Constitution save of DC 12. On a fail lose d6 Strength to a minimum 5 and Intelligence and Wisdom rolls are at disadvantage. Continue making Constitution saves every three days. A success ends the malady. Failure has no other effect than prolonging the illness.

Summer Fever: Spread by insect bites in the summer and fall causes high fevers and the occasional madness.

- Make a DC 10 Constitution save one day after exposure. Failure results in a high fever. Special failure inflicts a minor madness along with the fever. Roll a Constitution save daily. The fever breaks on a success. The madness resolves on a special success.

Poisons:

Given their insidious and deadly nature, poisons are illegal in most societies but are a favorite tool among assassins and other evil creatures.

a wound or washed off. A creature that takes piercing or slashing damage from an object coated with the poison is exposed to its effects.

Poisons come in the following four types.

1. **Contact:** Contact poison can be smeared on an object and remains potent until it is touched or washed off. A creature that touches contact poison with exposed skin suffers its effects.
2. **Ingested:** A creature must swallow an entire dose of ingested poison to suffer its effects. The dose can be delivered in food or a liquid. You may decide that a partial dose has a reduced effect, such as allowing advantage on the saving throw or dealing only half damage on a failed save.
3. **Inhaled:** These poisons are powders or gases that take effect when inhaled. Blowing the powder or releasing the gas subjects creatures in a 5 foot cube to its effect. The resulting cloud dissipates immediately afterward. Holding one's breath is ineffective against inhaled poisons, as they affect nasal membranes, tear ducts, and other parts of the body.
4. **Injury:** Injury poison can be applied to weapons, ammunition, trap components, and other objects that deal piercing or slashing damage and remains potent until delivered through

Poisons

Item	Type	Price per Dose
Assassin's blood	Ingested	150 SP
Burnt othur fumes	Inhaled	500 SP
Crawler mucus	Contact	200 SP
Essence of ether	Inhaled	300 SP
Malice	Inhaled	250 SP
Midnight tears	Ingested	1,500 SP
Oil of taggit	Contact	400 SP
Pale tincture	Ingested	250 SP
Purple worm poison	Injury	2,000 SP
Serpent venom	Injury	200 SP
Torpor	Ingested	600 SP
Truth serum	Ingested	150 SP
Wretch poison	Injury	200 SP
Wyvern poison	Injury	1,200 SP

Each type of poison has its own debilitating effects.

Assassin's Blood (Ingested). A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes d12 poison damage and is disadvantaged with Strength and Dexterity rolls for 24 hours. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage.

Burnt Othur Fumes (Inhaled). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or takes 3d6 poison damage, and must repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On each successive failed save, the character takes d6 poison damage. After three successful saves, the poison ends.

Crawler Mucus (Contact). This poison must be harvested from a dead or incapacitated crawler. A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution save or be paralyzed for 1 minute and is disadvantaged with Strength and Dexterity rolls. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its rounds, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Essence of Ether (Inhaled). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become down and out for 8 hours. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Malice (Inhaled). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become blinded for 1 hour and is disadvantaged with Strength and Dexterity rolls.

Midnight Tears (Ingested). A creature that ingests this poison suffers no effect until the stroke of midnight. If the poison has not been neutralized before then, the creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution save or take 9d6 poison damage. Take half damage on a success.

Oil of Taggit (Contact). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or becomes down and out for 24 hours. The creature wakes up if it takes damage.

Pale Tincture (Ingested). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take d6 poison damage and is disadvantaged with Strength and Dexterity rolls. The poisoned creature must repeat the saving throw every 24 hours, taking d6 poison damage on a failed save. Until this poison ends, the damage the poison deals can't be healed by any means. After seven successful saving throws, the effect ends and the creature can heal normally.

Purple Worm Poison (Injury). This poison must be harvested from a dead or incapacitated purple worm. A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 12d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Serpent Venom (Injury). This poison must be harvested from a dead or incapacitated giant poisonous snake. A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 3d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Torpor (Ingested). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 4d6 hours. The poisoned creature is down and out.

Truth Serum (Ingested). A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. The poisoned creature can't knowingly speak a lie, as if under the effect of a zone of truth spell.

Wretch Poison (Injury). This poison is typically made only by the wretches, and only in a place far removed from sunlight. A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is also down and out while poisoned in this way. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Wyvern Poison (Injury). This poison must be harvested from a dead or incapacitated wyvern. A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 7d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Madness:

Minor: Occasional odd beliefs or behaviors.

Moderate: Frequent odd beliefs or behaviors or impairment to some areas of daily life.

Major: Frequent extreme odd beliefs or behaviors or impairment to most areas of daily life.

Roll an Intelligence save after acquiring each minor madness after the third minor madness. Add one disadvantage die for each additional minor madness after the fourth minor madness. On a failure, add one moderate madness. On a special failure add a major madness. The character becomes an NPC if they gain two major madness's as they are totally disconnected from reality.

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