



1
3
4
7

BLACK DEATH

Bubonic plague is one of three types of plague caused by bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. One to seven days after exposure to the bacteria, flu-like symptoms develop. These symptoms include fever, headaches, and vomiting. Swollen and painful lymph nodes occur in the area closest to where the bacteria entered the skin. Occasionally, the swollen lymph nodes may break open.

The three types of plague are the result of the route of infection: bubonic plague, septicemic plague, and pneumonic plague. Bubonic plague is mainly spread by infected fleas from small animals. It may also result from exposure to the body fluids from a dead plague-infected animal. In the bubonic form of plague, the bacteria enter through the skin through a flea bite and travel via the lymphatic vessels to a lymph node, causing it to swell. Diagnosis is made by finding the bacteria in the blood, sputum, or fluid from lymph nodes.

The plague is believed to be the cause of the Black Death that swept through Asia, Europe, and Africa in the 14th century and killed an estimated 50 million people. This was about 25% to 60% of the European population. Because the plague killed so many of the working population, wages rose due to the demand for labour. Some historians see this as a turning point in European economic development. The disease was also responsible for the Justinian plague originating in the Eastern Roman Empire in the 6th century CE, as well as the third epidemic affecting China, Mongolia, and India originating in the Yunnan Province in 1855. The term bubonic is derived from a Greek word, meaning “groin”. The term “buboes” is also used to refer to the swollen lymph nodes.