

# The History of Pandemics

## VOCABULARY

Pandemic. (of a disease) prevalent over a whole country or the world.

Plague. a contagious bacterial disease characterized by fever and delirium, typically with the formation of buboes ( *bubonic plague* ) and sometimes infection of the lungs ( *pneumonic plague* ).

Exotic. originating in or characteristic of a distant foreign country.

Ecosystems. a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

Incubate. have an infectious disease developing inside one before symptoms appear.

Mitigating. having the effect of making something bad less severe, serious, or painful.

Conveyances. the action or process of transporting someone or something from one place to another.



## **The History of Pandemics**

As humans have spread across the world, so have infectious diseases. Even in this modern era, outbreaks are nearly constant, though not every outbreak reaches pandemic level as the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has.

Today's visualization outlines some of history's most deadly pandemics, from the Antonine Plague to the current COVID-19 event.

Disease and illnesses have plagued humanity since the earliest days, our mortal flaw. However, it was not until the marked shift to agrarian communities that the scale and spread of these diseases increased dramatically.

Widespread trade created new opportunities for human and animal interactions that sped up such epidemics. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, influenza, smallpox, and others first appeared during these early years.

The more civilized humans became – with larger cities, more exotic trade routes, and increased contact with different populations of people, animals, and ecosystems – the more likely pandemics would occur.



Here are some of the major pandemics that have occurred over time:

Name	Time period	Type / Pre-human host	Death toll
Antonine Plague	165-180	Believed to be either smallpox or measles	5M
Japanese smallpox epidemic	735-737	Variola major virus	1M
Plague of Justinian	541-542	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	30-50M
Black Death	1347-1351	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	200M
New World Smallpox Outbreak	1520 – onwards	Variola major virus	56M
Great Plague of London	1665	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	100,000
Italian plague	1629-1631	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	1M
Cholera Pandemics 1-6	1817-1923	V. cholerae bacteria	1M+
Third Plague	1885	Yersinia pestis bacteria / Rats, fleas	12M (China and India)
Yellow Fever	Late 1800s	Virus / Mosquitoes	100,000-150,000 (U.S.)
Russian Flu	1889-1890	Believed to be H2N2 (avian origin)	1M
Spanish Flu	1918-1919	H1N1 virus / Pigs	40-50M
Asian Flu	1957-1958	H2N2 virus	1.1M
Hong Kong Flu	1968-1970	H3N2 virus	1M
HIV/AIDS	1981-present	Virus / Chimpanzees	25-35M
Swine Flu	2009-2010	H1N1 virus / Pigs	200,000
SARS	2002-2003	Coronavirus / Bats, Civets	770
Ebola	2014-2016	Ebolavirus / Wild animals	11,000
MERS	2015-Present	Coronavirus / Bats, camels	850
COVID-19	2019-Present	Coronavirus – Unknown (possibly pangolins)	4,700 (as of Mar 12, 2020)

As you can see, the Black Death (also known as the Pestilence, the Great Mortality, or the Plague) was the deadliest pandemic recorded in human history. The Black Death resulted in the deaths of up to 75–200 million people in Eurasia and North Africa, peaking in Europe from 1347 to 1351.



Note: Many of the death toll numbers listed above are best estimates based on available research. Some, such as the Plague of Justinian, are subject to debate based on new evidence.

As of today October 21, 2020, the total number of Covid-19 cases sum up to 41,042,920 and resulted in the death of 1,129,591. The coronavirus COVID-19 is affecting 215 countries and territories around the world and 2 international conveyances.

Despite the persistence of disease and pandemics throughout history, there's one consistent trend over time – a gradual reduction in the death rate. Healthcare improvements and understanding the factors that incubate pandemics have been powerful tools in mitigating their impact.

[\[https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/a-visual-history-of-pandemics\]](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/a-visual-history-of-pandemics)



Parrots Kun Eikaiwa

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What was considered to be the deadliest pandemic recorded in human history?
2. What are your thoughts about this article?
3. Which among these pandemics are you most familiar with? Elaborate your answer.
4. Describe how Covid-19 affected your country.
5. What did your government do in response to Covid-19?
6. How are you holding up during this quarantine?
7. Did COVID-19 change how you foresee your career?
8. What lessons, if any, have you learned during the pandemic?
9. Has [COMPANY] laid off employees since COVID-19 began? If so, why? (question for students who are already working)
10. Do you foresee when will this pandemic ends? Describe.

