

What

After the Black Death in 1348 the Plague never really went away. The disease came back most summers but killed only the young, the weak and the old.

However, in **1665** the Plague struck London with a very virulent form of the disease. It killed over 60,000 people a week at its height and the estimated death toll is 200,000. The symptoms were the same as the Black Death with many suffering the Pneumonic version of the Plague. The outbreak was eventually brought under control by the Great Fire of London in 1666 which led to many of the infected houses being burnt down and the rats that were spreading the disease dying.

Beliefs About Causes

There were two main ideas about how the Black Death was being spread.

The first was **SUPERNATURAL** and the second was **NATURAL**.

Ultimately because no-one knew about germs or vectors (the rats) this led to much speculation.

Supernatural Causes

- God was sending the plague as a punishment for the sins of the people (such as children disobeying their parents and women wearing high heels).
- This was the beginning of the end of days and God was coming to deliver his final judgement on mankind.

Natural Causes

- It was caused by bad smells (miasma).
- It was caused by foul air thrown up by Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.
- The planets were causing the Plague
- It spread through touch (close!)
- The humours were out of balance.

Great Plague 1665

Cures

Again, due to the lack of knowledge people came up with both **NATURAL** and **SUPERNATURAL** cures for the disease. Most would have been fairly ineffective.

Supernatural Cures

- Paying for prayers to be said on your behalf in Church.

Natural Cures

- Clean up the streets to avoid the bad smells (this worked!)
- Runaway!
- Quarantine those infected for 28days to prevent the spread.
- Burst the Buboes (this may have worked)
- Bleed the patient to balance the humours.

Short-term impact

- Abolished open sewers
- Wider streets and Pavements introduced.
- Wooden buildings abolished
- Greater sense of community

Government Intervention 1665

Possibly because this outbreak was contained in London the government had a greater impact on the Plague

- They hired street cleaners to clean the streets
- Paid for Bonfires to clear the air
- Paid for Watchmen to keep people under quarantine
- Paid doctors to check all the dead for Plague and quarantine those who had come into contact with Plague victims.
- Culled stray Cats and Dogs.

Similarities with 1348

- Belief in natural and supernatural causes and cures
- Don't know the cause
- Quarantine

Differences with 1348

- Less religious impact (no flagellants in 1665)
- Co-ordinated Government intervention
- Mortality rates kept a record of in 1665

Long-term impact

- This was limited because despite immediate improvements as London continued to grow the Government lost interest in Public Health.