

## The Sick Ship

During long oceans voyages across the oceans and unfamiliar lands, sailors and explorers could contract a variety of different diseases, each of which could be equally terrible and deadly (and each of which can still be contracted today). Below are explanations of each. On the next page, play the role of a ship doctor by identifying the ailment that each sailor has contracted.

Scurvy	Scurvy is a condition caused by a lack of Vitamin-C over time. Sailors during the Age of Exploration, with inadequate and contaminated food supplies, were particularly vulnerable. Scurvy results in the formation of painful sores, bleeding from the gums, and eventually, organ failure. It can easily be reversed with Vitamin-C, although during the Age of Exploration, it was thought scurvy was contracted through contaminated air of swamps and marshes. Scurvy is thought to have killed over two million sailors in the Age of Exploration.
Yellow Fever	This deadly virus is caused by infected mosquitoes. It shuts down the kidneys and liver and makes the skin yellow from jaundice. It results in a high fever and is often fatal.
Dysentery	This is a virus that spreads in unsanitary conditions (such as those found on crowded ships). It attacks the intestines and results in severe, bloody diarrhea. Some people who get dysentery die of dehydration.
Cholera	This virus is similar to dysentery and spreads in unsanitary conditions. People get cholera from contaminated food or water (often when human waste comes in contact with food or water). Those who contract cholera get diarrhea, vomiting, and high fevers. It can be fatal from dehydration.
Malaria	Malaria is caused by infected mosquitoes and is contagious. It can result in high fever, brain damage, coma, and death. Like scurvy, malaria was thought to be caused by contaminated air in swamps and marshes. Today, it remains one of the deadliest diseases in the world, particularly in poor, tropical regions of the world.
Typhoid	Typhoid is another disease that is spread in unsanitary conditions. Like cholera and dysentery, it results in severe fevers, diarrhea, or internal bleeding. Typhoid can also cause a rash on the chest.
Beriberi	Beriberi is a rare disease caused from a lack of vitamin B1 (thiamin). It was more common on ships during the Age of Exploration where diets were inadequate. People with beriberi have shortness of breath, increased heart rate, confusion, difficulty walking, insomnia, and swelling in the lower legs. It can occur simultaneously with scurvy.
Pellagra	Pellagra was a common disease of sailors during the Age of Exploration. It is caused by a lack of niacin in the diet. Symptoms of pellagra included inflamed skin, diarrhea, dementia, and sores in the mouth. Left untreated, pellagra can be fatal.

## **Diagnose the patients.**

### **Patient 1:**

Our first patient is having severe diarrhea and cannot hold down any food or water. We are afraid that he is becoming more and more dehydrated. We noticed that he is developing a rash on his chest.

Doctor's Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

### **Patient 2:**

This patient came to us with a high fever after we sailed across the equator. It was probably the vapors that rise from the swampy water we passed through! We need to help him because he is danger of falling into a coma.

Doctor's Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

### **Patient 3:**

This patient came to us near death. He has a very high fever. I noticed before he closed his eyes (possibly for good) that his eyes were discolored and his skin was yellow.

Doctor's Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

### **Patients 4, 5, 6, and 7**

These patients all seem to have the same symptoms. They are developing sores all over their bodies and they are bleeding from the gums. Their teeth are falling out. We need to avoid the swamp waters! Too many of our sailors are falling to this terrible condition!

Doctor's Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

Answers:

Patient 1 - Typhoid

Patient 2 - Malaria

Patient 3 - Yellow Fever

Patient 4 - Scurvy