

Maine's Historic Pandemics

| | Smallpox | Cholera | Tuberculosis | Polio | Influenza |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Global time period* | 1500 – 1900 | 1800 – 1900 | 1800 – 1960 | 1800 - 1995 | 1918 – 1919 |
| Maine time period | 1600 – 1800 | 1830 – 1850 | 1900 – 1950 | 1900 – 1960 | 1918 – 1919 |
| Medical impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever and rash Long-term scarring Blindness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diarrhea Vomiting Dehydration Shock Quick death | Often had no symptoms or just coughing but led to lung damage and quick death. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flu-like symptoms Led to spinal cord infection and long-term paralysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flu-like symptoms (chills, fever, fatigue) Could cause blue skin and rapid suffocation from fluid in lungs |
| Death rate* | 30% | 50 – 60% | 25% | 5 – 15% | 2% |
| Method of spread | Shared air and surfaces | Food and water contaminated with infected feces | Shared air | Infected feces and person-to-person contact | Shared air and person-to-person contact |
| Unique features | Largely impacted Native Americans via European colonization, 80% of Wabanaki people died. In some cases, Native people were infected by colonists on purpose. Smallpox was used as a tool of genocide. | There have actually been seven cholera pandemics. | Patients, often poor, were isolated and treated in sanatoriums. | Mainly impacted children under 15 who would use crutches or leg braces as a form of treatment. | First wave was more mild, second and third were extremely deadly for everyone, in part because it spread across the world quickly during World War I. |
| Treatment then | George Washington was a proponent of “inoculation,” or giving people smallpox so that they gained immunity. | Common belief at the time was that bad behavior or inferior cultural practices would lead to cholera. | A belief that fresh air and quiet could cure TB led to rise in sanatoriums. | Some parents associated polio with open water and did not let their children swim in pools or lakes. | Doctors recommended high doses of aspirin which led to deaths from aspirin poisoning. |
| Treatment now | Vaccination, symptom relief and rehydration. | Vaccine, rehydration, IV fluids and antibiotics. | Vaccine, antibiotics. | Vaccine, bed rest, pain control and physical therapy. | Vaccine, rest and fluid. |
| Eradicated globally? | Yes | No | No | No | No, new strains come as seasonal flu. |

*Time periods and death rate refer to pandemics at their peak global spread. Most pandemic viruses still impact some geographic areas with less access to medical care.