

Unholy Death Knight 8.1 Guide

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<https://discord.gg/AyW5RUW>

Unholiest Discord

Updated as of 12/31/2018

Introduction

The time has come where Battle for Azeroth is soon to be out, and Unholy has received many changes. While the core gameplay of wound management is still what wraps up the rotation of Unholy, we received a near full talent tree overhaul, some new baseline abilities added, minor global cooldown related changes, and some minor changes spell-wise.

Note while tuning and work on simcraft finishes up, more will be added (such as Uldir gear).

Recap of Unholy 8.1 Changes

General Changes

- ❖ [Helchains](#) (Azerite Trait) - Dark Transformation ignites you and your pet with flaming chains that deal Fire damage every second to enemies between you for 15 seconds. Replaces [Horrid Experimentation](#)
- ❖ [Magus of the Dead](#) (Azerite Trait) - Apocalypse and Army of the Damned additionally summon a Magus of the Dead for 20 seconds who hurls Frostbolts and Shadow Bolts at your foes. Replaces [Festering Doom](#)
- ❖ [Cold Hearted](#) (Azerite Trait) - Icebound Fortitude heals you every second and its cooldown is reduced by 15 seconds. New Azerite Trait
- ❖ [Death Strike](#) has its cost reduced by 10 (down to 35) and it's healing increased up to an additional 60% (was 40%).
- ❖ [All Will Serve](#) had it's AI fixed to attack more consistently, allowing it to scale with Haste now. It was slightly nerfed in damage, however it still ends up a net gain.

Removed

- ❖ [Festering Doom](#) (Azerite Trait)
- ❖ [Horrid Experimentation](#) (Azerite Trait)

Useful Links

[Azerite Items/Traits Search](#)

Weakauras

[8.0 Unholy Death Knight Weakaura Bundle](#)

made by @Publik#5576

[All Classes/Specs Weakaura Bundles](#)

made by @Publik#5576

[Cold Heart Weakaura](#)

Simulations (Trinkets, Racial, Ect)

<https://bloodmallet.com>

Run by @Bloodmallet(EU)#8246

<https://www.herodamage.com>

Faction Assault Tracker

<http://assaulttimer.com/>

Unholiest Communities

Battle.net - US

<https://us.blizzard.com/invite/P7RMzZ2T04q>

Unholiest Communities

Battle.net - EU

<https://eu.blizzard.com/invite/R4vBdLUMjq>

Thank you @Ace Azzermeen#7803

General Questions/FAQ

- **What legendaries should I wear for Pre-Patch, and then for leveling in BFA?**
Generally there's no bad option here. [Tak'theritrix's Shoulderpad](#)s will still be very powerful in a build with [Army of the Damned](#) or [Summon Gargoyle](#), [Cold Heart](#) still offers a strong ST burst option into our rotation. [Death March](#) will have some fun use with [Defile](#) having a baseline cooldown of only 20 seconds now.
Currently however, there has been a shift to using a combo of [Sephuz's Secret](#) along with [Cold Heart](#), with [Uvanimor, the Unbeautiful](#) as a currently high simming alternative. However as always, sim what you have and see what is best for your character.

Leveling brings up more options, as we want to maximize our time spent completing quests, and not traveling or in combat such as using. You could use [Sephuz's Secret](#) or [Aggramar's Stride](#) for the sake of mobility. Mixing in [Cold Heart](#), [Uvanimor, the Unbeautiful](#) or [Soul of the Deathlords](#) can increase overall damage and thus decrease combat time.

- **What stats do I want to aim for in Uldir?**
Gearing will heavily depend on what you have currently, and as such it's always best to find the specific stat weights for your character. In general, many players gravitate to a heavy Haste/Crit build, but if you have bad luck with gear and end up with lots of Vers/Mastery, you can still do well.
- **Is there a Pawn string I could get for my weights?**
No. You need to sim your own character and do the stat weights for it there, it will then give you YOUR weights. Otherwise the pawn string won't be accurate to you, and your gear. [A guide on this is located here.](#) Or you can [use raidbots to get them for you.](#)
- **Should I use X talent, or Y talent?**
With the changes we received to our talent tree there are some choices in what we can run, especially depending on if you are into mythic +, PVP, or raiding as your main focus. In the talent section this will be explained as has been done before.
- **Does my rotation change in Battle for Azeroth compared to in Legion?**
Overall Unholy plays very similar to in Legion. With the changes to talents, there are builds that could alter your rotation, yet the flow Unholy should largely feel similar to most.
- **What enchants, gems and food am I using with this build?**
Ring Enchants - Secondary stat highest for you
Gems - One [Kraken's Eye of Strength](#), otherwise secondary stat gem highest for you
Food - [Bountiful Captain's Feast](#)
Potion - [Battle Potion of Strength](#)
Flask - [Flask of the Undertow](#)

Azerite Armor Traits

Azerite Armor pieces come with a set of traits on them ranging from self healing/shielding, damage increasing traits or other small utility tools. Some noteworthy Unholy/Death Knight traits (utility, damage or otherwise), otherwise refer to [Bloodmallet](#) or [Herodamage](#) to see what performs best:

Tier 3 (Outermost Ring)

- [Festermight](#) - Bursting a [Festering Wound](#) grants you Strength for 20 seconds, stacking. Stacking this effect does not increase it's duration.

The effect can be compared similarly to the [Fabled Feather of Ji-kun](#) where the strength buff will slowly ramp up to a peak.

- [Cankorous Wounds](#) - [Festering Strike](#) deals additional damage and has a 20% increased change of applying 3 [Festering Wounds](#).

While adding more damage into [Festering Strike](#) is a lackluster part of this trait, the increased chance of applying 3 wounds makes this a quality of life and rotation flow changer. While only a small increase to it's chance, the less [Festering Strike](#) casts we need, the more [Scourge Strike](#) casts you can use.

Tier 2 (Middle Ring) **These are non class specific**

- [Heed My Call](#) - Your damaging abilities have a chance to deal Nature damage to your target, and deal Nature damage to enemies within 3 yards of that target.

A very passive increase, making it so that we get a nice boost in aoe as well as single target.

- [Gutripper](#) - Your damaging abilities have a chance to deal Physical damage to the target. Gutripper occurs much more often against targets below 30% health.

A passive source of damage, which acts better in execute range

Tier 3 (Inner Ring)

- [March of the Damned](#) - When you use Death's Advance, gain Speed for 15 seconds, also reduces the cooldown of Death's Advance to 40 seconds.

This trait feels amazing to use, adding an extra speed boost to our baseline movement cooldown, as well as a fair amount of reduction on it's cooldown.

Tools > Document Outline to navigate (It scrolls down)

Battle for Dazar'alor Raid Boss Tips

Champions of the Light

- While the Crusader adds are casting [Blinding Faith](#), if you use Anti-Magic Shell then you can immune the blind effect without having to turn away.
- Anti-Magic Shell can also immune the damage from Consecration if used before stepping on it, useful for positioning if adds are just on the edge of the ground effect.
- Death Grip can be used to great effect to help position adds, generally useful to your tanks to move the Disciples who like to cast a lot.
- If you apply Virulent Plague to the adds you can cast Epidemic to be able to get free damage off of them, be careful doing this on progression, or once you vastly overgear the encounter as it could contribute to accidentally killing the adds.

Grong

- Using Anti-Magic Shell before a Tantrum/Death Knell is cast will help to prevent the Shattered/Death Touched debuff. Using either Spell Eater or Icebound Fortitude during this will help you absorb more before receiving the debuff.

Jadefire Masters

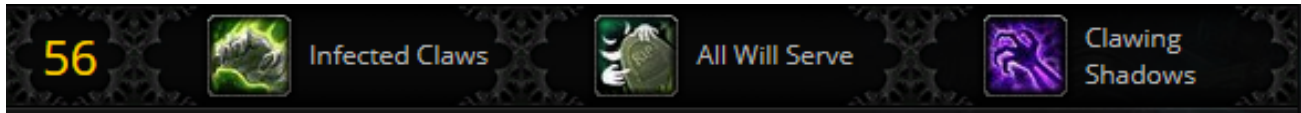
- The Spirit of Xuen add can be used to proc the Haste buff from Soul Reaper, can be easily controlled with Death Grip, and Asphyxiate can help keep it in melee. Maximize your Festering Wounds on it as it dies if you have Fester might traits.
- The wall has to have you cast Outbreak on each segment individually, however this is still useful as it overall increases the speed in which it's destroyed.
- Death's Advance lets you walk through the Ring of Hostility, letting a high movement phase become simple for Unholy Death Knights. If you also use Wraith Walk you can get across the room without any additional help, without it a Warlock portal will get you the rest of the way there, or just aim for a lane at the closest to the wall area you can.

Opulence

- Due to the add spawns in the boss phase, Infected Claws has been performing very well on this fight.

Talents

Keep in mind this is not what is best, this is an explanation of changes currently and what is seen as good/bad, not backed by sims currently (7/15/18)

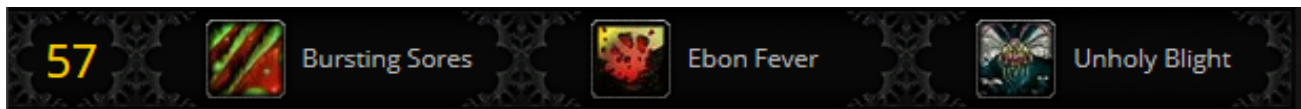


Tier 56 Talents

- [Infected Claws](#) - 30% chance for the Ghoul to apply wounds via [Claw](#), down from 35%
- [All Will Serve](#) - Now no longer removes the cooldown of Raise Dead, however it is on the devs radar as of mid beta for being reworked
- [Clawing Shadows](#) - Unchanged in 8.0.1

Currently, [All Will Serve](#) is performing the best of this tier, with [Clawing Shadows](#) being a very viable option as well.

While [Infected Claws](#) offers much in the way of AoE application of wounds, and meshes well with [Festermight](#), it is a more niche used talent. [Clawing Shadows](#) offers us the ranged option for our rotation, especially handy when leveling or on high movement fights. [All Will Serve](#) is performing the best for many currently, especially after the AI fixed and Haste scaling.

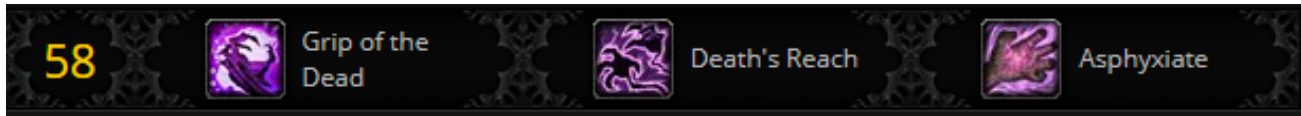


Tier 57 Talents

- [Bursting Sores](#) - [Festering Wounds](#) now deal 25% more damage when burst, down from 50%
- [Ebon Fever](#) - [Virulent Plague](#) now deals 15% more damage, down from 20%.
- [Unholy Blight](#) - New on demand burst dot.

Currently, [Ebon Fever](#) is performing the best of this tier.

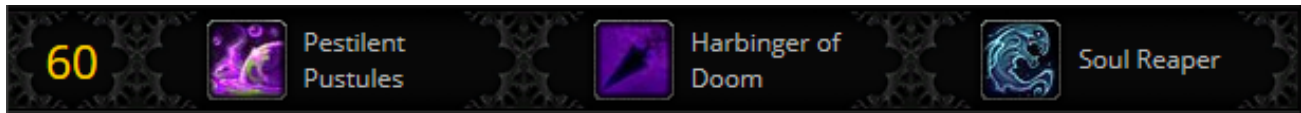
[Bursting Sores](#) meshes well with again [Festermight](#), giving it some niche uses especially in Mythic+ dungeons. [Ebon Fever](#) remains the dominant talent in this row however, giving additional dot damage into our rotation with little effort. [Unholy Blight](#) offers a new burst AoE option with a dot to add in addition to our normal [Virulent Plague](#), however it lags behind the other two talents.



Tier 58 Talents

- [Grip of the Dead](#) - applies a slow to our [Death and Decay](#), starting our strong and decreasing over it's duration.
- [Death's Reach](#) - Increases the range of our [Death Grip](#) by 10 yards, and makes it reset upon killing an enemy that rewards exp or honor.
- [Asphyxiate](#) - Stuns for 4 seconds, down from 5

Our new utility row, giving a bit of choice based on our situation. [Death's Reach](#) can be handy when leveling, as it will allow for easier control of mobs you are pulling. [Grip of the Dead](#) offers a strong slow, but in solo content you want to be standing in your [Death and Decay](#), not running from it so this will be better for group content than leveling. [Asphyxiate](#) gives us a single target stun, very handy in any content, especially when leveling and facing stronger rare mobs.

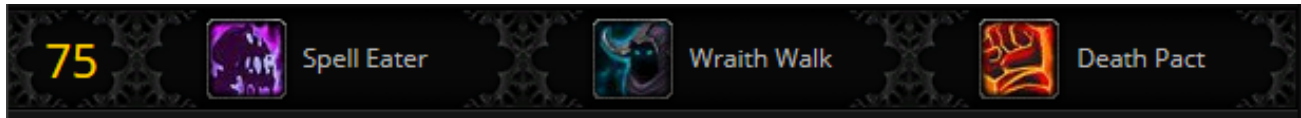


Tier 60 Talents

- [Pestilent Pustules](#) - Bursting a [Festering Wound](#) has a 10% chance to grant you [Runic Corruption](#).
- [Harbinger of Doom](#) - [Sudden Doom](#) triggers 15% more often and can accumulate up to 2 charges.
- [Soul Reaper](#) - Deals damage over 8 seconds, restores 2 runes on use, and can grant a 10% haste buff if the target affected dies. 45 second cooldown.

Currently, [Soul Reaper](#) is performing the best of this tier.

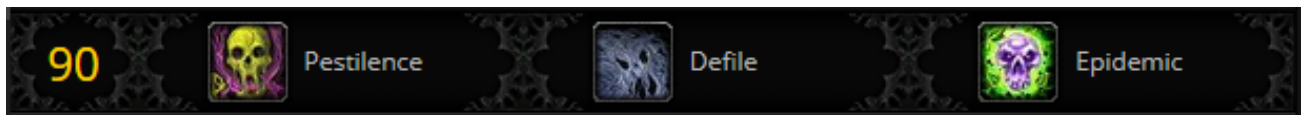
[Soul Reaper](#) has remained the dominant talent of this row as we go into the second raid of Battle for Azeroth. [Harbinger of Doom](#) builds well into [Death Coil](#) centered builds, and offers the huge quality of life bonus of [Sudden Doom](#) stacking, however it has found very little use. [Pestilent Pustules](#) was completely changed, but it's new form blends well with [Festermight](#) and builds into the niche Mythic+ builds.



Tier 75 Talents

- [Spell Eater](#) - Increases the amount [Anti-Magic Shell](#) absorbs by 30%, up from 20%
- [Wraith Walk](#) - Now is a talent, 1 minute cooldown, lasts for 4 seconds and increases speed by 70%. (Still can't be reduced below 170% while using).
- [Death Pact](#) - Returning as a 50% heal of your maximum health, absorbing 30% of your maximum health in healing for 15 seconds.

Some changes here, with what will remain a tier we do not change much. [Spell Eater](#) offers some additional damage reduction, however [Death Pact](#) offers a strong personal healing cooldown that we lack. [Wraith Walk](#) would only ever be needed if the encounters we were facing required more mobility than [Death's Advance](#) offers.



Tier 90 Talents

- [Pestilence](#) - [Death and Decay](#) damage has a 10% chance to apply a [Festering Wound](#) to the enemy.
- [Defile](#) - Now has a 20 second cooldown and no longer grants Mastery as it deals damage
- [Epidemic](#) - Now costs 30 runic power and has no cooldown/charges

Currently, [Pestilence](#) is performing the best of this tier (Single Target, however most will still take [Epidemic](#)).

You will see that while Pestilence will be shown as the highest simming talent of this row in single target, Epidemic is still taken the large majority of the time. The minor increase Pestilence can give compared to what Epidemic offers in terms of flexibility and an AoE Runic Power dump is by and large not worth trading out very often.



Tier 100 Talents

- [Army of the Damned](#) - [Death Coil](#) reduces the cooldown [Apocalypse](#) by 1 second, and [Army of the Dead](#) by 5 seconds
- [Unholy Frenzy](#) - Now a 1.25 minute cooldown that grants 20% Haste and causes your auto attacks to apply a [Festering Wound](#) to the target, lasts 12 seconds
- [Summon Gargoyle](#) - Now a talent, Gary will last for 30 seconds (34 due to summoning animations), and will deal 1% increased damage for every 2 Runic Power you spend.

Currently, [Unholy Frenzy](#) is performing the best of this tier.

While [Unholy Frenzy](#) is the common favorite of this tier, both [Army of the Damned](#) and [Summon Gargoyle](#) are very close depending on your gear and can also net you good results. [Army of the Damned](#) works especially well in Mythic+ with the combination of the Last Surprise Azerite Trait.

Talent Builds

Current Build



This is likely the most popular build you will see people running. While this is the most popular, it is by and far not the only choice.

- ❖ Tier 56 - [Clawing Shadows](#) is another popular pick of this row.
- ❖ Tier 57 - [Bursting Sores](#) is a niche dungeon build pick.
- ❖ Tier 60 - [Pestilent Pustules](#) is a niche dungeon build pick.
- ❖ Tier 90 - Both [Pestilence](#) and [Defile](#) can be used effectively as well depending on the encounter.
- ❖ Tier 100 - [Army of the Damned](#) and [Summon Gargoyle](#) can be used effectively as well, make sure to look into what is best for your characters setup.

Rotation/Priority List

This is a rough guideline, setup for general Unholy rotation, not accounting for Legion legendaries or Azerite traits.

Opener

- ~5 seconds before pull [Army of the Dead](#)
- 1 second before pull - [Dark Transformation](#)
- [Outbreak](#)
- [Unholy Blight](#) (if talented)
- [Festering Strike](#) twice (will assure 4+ wounds now)
- [Apocalypse](#) with 4+ wounds
- Refresh [Virulent Plague](#) via [Outbreak](#) if at 1-2s remaining
- [Summon Gargoyle](#) (talent) - Aim to have 80+ Runic Power at this point.
- [Unholy Frenzy](#)** (talent) - avoid overcapping [Festering Wounds](#)

**Note that [Unholy Frenzy](#) can be cast when you are starting your rotation, having you use only one [Festering Strike](#) instead as you Auto Attacks will give you enough [Festering Wounds](#) to cast [Apocalypse](#), there is overall a insignificant damage difference (1-10 dps) but they both offer different flows to how the opener plays. Use the one you prefer, just be careful to overcap [Festering Wounds](#) if you choose to [Festering Strike](#) twice, when using [Infected Claws](#) as well.

Without/After Summon Gargoyle

- [Army of the Dead](#)
- [Apocalypse](#) with 4+ wounds
- [Soul Reaper](#) - if you have less than 3 runes available
- [Dark Transformation](#)
- [Summon Gargoyle](#) / [Unholy Frenzy](#) (avoiding capping [Festering Wounds](#))
- [Outbreak](#) on any target without [Virulent Plague](#) - Refresh at 1-2 seconds remaining
- [Unholy Blight](#) (if talented and off cooldown)
- [Death and Decay](#) if [Pestilence](#) is talented
- [Death Coil](#) - avoid overcapping Runic Power or [Sudden Doom](#) procs as best you can
- [Festering Strike](#) at 2 or less wounds
- [Scourge Strike](#) with at least 1 wound on the target

During Summon Gargoyle

- [Death Coil](#)- **Highest Priority**
- [Soul Reaper](#) - (talented) if you have less than 3 runes available. **Medium Priority**
- [Festering Strike](#) with less than 5 wounds on the target. **Medium Priority**
- [Unholy Blight](#) (if talented and off cooldown) **Medium Priority**
- [Death and Decay](#) if [Pestilence](#) is talented **Low Priority**
- [Scourge Strike](#) as long as 1 wound is on the target. **Low Priority**
- [Outbreak](#) to keep up [Virulent Plague](#) - minimize lost ticks but is **Low Priority**

Cleave/AoE.

- Cast [Dark Transformation](#)
- Keep [Virulent Plague](#) up on all targets
- Cast [Unholy Blight](#) (if talented)
- Cast [Death and Decay](#)
- [Apocalypse](#) at 4 wounds if off CD
- Cast [Scourge Strike](#) until [Death and Decay](#) wears off
- Cast [Epidemic](#) to avoid capping Runic Power or after [Death and Decay](#) wears off

Changelog

7/15/18 - Updated for 8.0.1 ([Copy of 7.3 Version of guide](#))

7/26/18 - Added current (level 110) talent build, updated useful links section with weakaura's, communities and areas for talent/geat/ect sims, clarifications on opener as well as in talent breakdown section.

8/9/18 - Veiss Versa shambles onto the guide!

8/23/18 - Updates to the Azerite Armor Traits section

12/31/18 - New Year update of 8.1

Coming Soon (™)

More updates to Useful Links section