

Connor Reinhold

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## Diseases of War

World War I was a major war from 1914 to 1918 between the Allies and the Central powers. The final death toll in the battle was 16 million, but the most deadly part of it were the diseases that came at the end of World War I. Though it may seem like a coincidence, the massive mobilization of people in large groups, combined with dead bodies left out in the open, gave the disease free reign to spread and caused commanders many casualties. Diseases such as Influenza, Trench Foot, and Trench Fever (named due to originating in the awful conditions of trenches) made the war much worse than it needed to be. Trenches usually resulted in very dreadful conditions, however the German trenches were more often concrete-lined, easier to clean, and therefore a smaller chance of infection than those of the British and French.

One major disease during World War I was trench fever which was caused by body lice. A person could get it more than once. In some places, it could be reduced by Pest Control, or cleaning and chemically delousing (ridding them of pests) clothes. This disease typically causes a rash, fever, and bone and joint pain. The bone pain can last for several weeks after the illness has subsided and is often incapacitating. 800,000 cases were reported during the war with 4.5% of troops getting it. 80% of these infected people remained unfit for months, since it was a low mortality disease very few people died from it.

Another harmful disease was Trench Foot. This was an infection of the feet caused by cold, wet, insanitary conditions and losing blood circulation. In severe cases, soldiers had to have

their feet or legs amputated. In total, there were 75,000 casualties for the British. Since it was a horrid fungal infection of the feet, armies tried to prevent this by draining trenches, and getting soldiers to bring extra pairs of socks. Another way it was cured was covering their feet with a grease made from whale-oil. It has been estimated that one group of soldiers at the front would use ten gallons of whale-oil every day.

Trench Mouth brought much pain upon soldiers, once again due to the the awful sanitary conditions. This could be caused by bad oral hygiene, poor nutrition, smoking and stress. Symptoms of this are that the gums become red and very swollen. This is an infection of the mouth that develops painful ulcers and swelling in the gum.

Lastly, Typhoid fever was spread by troops eating and drinking contaminated food or water and caused many deaths and much debility during the Great War period, particularly as trench life had a lot of poor hygiene and lack of sanitation. Typhoid could be spread by fleas, or transmitted by eating the feces of an infected person, which was common due to the awful conditions in trenches. The mortality rate ranges anywhere from 5-20%, depending on where soldiers were and the conditions that they were in. Though this disease wasn't only limited to World War I, the spreading was vastly increased due to much worse sanitation conditions.

Altogether, these diseases made living in trenches go from unsanitary and gross, to outright dangerous. As the massive grouping of soldiers combined with the terrible living conditions of trenches, diseases could quickly sweep from one soldier to the next.

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