

# Cancer Mage

Adapted faithfully from the *Cancer Mage* prestige class in D&D 3e's *Book of Vile Darkness* to D&D 5e as a whole standalone class in all of its glory. **Trigger**

**Warning:** Substantial, consistent, incessant mentions of terminal diseases.

| Level | Proficiency Bonus | Features   | Sneak Attack | Cantrips Known | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th |
|-------|-------------------|--|--------------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1st   | +2                | Diseased Host, Spellcasting                                      |              | 2              | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2nd   | +2                | Pathogen Vector  |              | 2              | 3   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 3rd   | +2                | Sneak Attack   | 1d6          | 2              | 4   | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 4th   | +2                | Ability Score Improvement, <i>Cantrip Versatility (Optional)</i> | 1d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 5th   | +3                | Tatterdemalion   | 2d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 6th   | +3                | Pathogen Vector Feature  | 2d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   | 3   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 7th   | +3                |  | 3d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 8th   | +3                | Ability Score Improvement, <i>Cantrip Versatility (Optional)</i> | 3d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |
| 9th   | +4                | Contagion  | 4d6          | 3              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 3   | 1   |     |     |     |     |
| 10th  | +4                | Pathogen Vector Feature  | 4d6          | 4              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 3   | 2   |     |     |     |     |
| 11th  | +4                |  | 5d6          | 4              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 1   |     |     |     |
| 12th  | +4                | Ability Score  | 5d6          | 4              | 4   | 3   | 3   | 3   | 2   | 1   |     |     |     |

|      |    |  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|----|--|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|      |    | Improvement,<br><i>Cantrip Versatility</i><br><i>(Optional)</i>                  |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13th | +5 |  | 6d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |   |   |
| 14th | +5 | Pathogen Vector<br>Feature   | 6d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |   |   |
| 15th | +5 |  | 7d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |   |
| 16th | +5 | Ability Score<br>Improvement,<br><i>Cantrip Versatility</i><br><i>(Optional)</i> | 7d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |   |
| 17th | +6 |  | 8d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 18th | +6 | Viral Ally   | 8d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 19th | +6 | Ability Score<br>Improvement,<br><i>Cantrip Versatility</i><br><i>(Optional)</i> | 9d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 20th | +6 | Disease Form   | 9d6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

## Requirements

**Alignment:** Any Evil

**Special:** the cancer mage must have fallen victim to the ravages of a disease and must have taken damage from a poison.

**Multiclassing:** Minimum Wisdom 13 and Dexterity 13

## Class Features

**Hit Dice:** 1d6

**Hit Points at 1st Level:** 6 + CON

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 1d6 (or 4) + your CON modifier per Cancer Mage level after 1st

## Proficiencies

**Armor:** Padded Armor

**Weapons:** Simple weapons, hand crossbows, shortswords

**Tools:** Poisoner's kit

**Saving Throws:** Charisma, Constitution

**Skills:** Choose three from Animal Handling, Intimidation, Medicine, Nature, Perception, Religion, Stealth and Survival

## Equipment

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

(a) a shortsword or (b) any simple weapon

(a) a component pouch or (b) a profane focus

(a) a scholar's pack or (b) an explorer's pack

Padded armor, a dead rat.

### Profane Focus

A profane focus is an object intrinsically related to pathogens and the foul forces of nature. It might be the disease-ridden corpse of a critter, a small ampoule with poison or a staff made whole of dead wood.

| Profane Focus    | Cost  | Weight | Notes  |
|------------------|---|--------|--|
| Dead Rat         | 1 cp  | 0.5 lb | -  |
| Broken Ampoule   | 5 sp  | -      | -  |
| Deadwood Staff   | 5 gp  | 4 lb   | -  |
| Poisoned Ampoule | 10 gp + price of the poison inside the ampoule. | -      | Refer to the Poisons table in the DMG for a list of Poisons. |

## Spellcasting

As an embodiment of disease itself, you can shape natural powers to foul ends.

### Cantrips

At 1st level, you know two cantrips of your choice from the cancer mage spell list. You learn additional cancer mage cantrips of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the Cancer Mage table.

### Spell Slots

The Cancer Mage table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your sorcerer spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these sorcerer spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

## Spells Known of 1st Level and Higher

The Cancer Mage table shows how many spell slots you have to cast your cancer mage spells of 1st level and higher. To cast one of these cancer mage spells, you must expend a slot of the spell's level or higher. You regain all expended spell slots when you finish a long rest.

You prepare the list of cancer mage spells that are available for you to cast, choosing from the druid spell list. When you do so, choose a number of cancer mage spells equal to your Wisdom modifier + your Cancer Mage level (minimum of one spell). The spells must be of a level for which you have spell slots.

You can also change your list of prepared spells when you finish a long rest. Preparing a new list of cancer mage spells requires time spent in foul acts of body adjustment: at least 1 minute per spell level for each spell on your list.

## Spellcasting Ability

Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for your druid spells, since your magic is related to your attunement with the diseases within. You use your Wisdom whenever a spell refers to your spellcasting ability. In addition, you use your Wisdom modifier when setting the saving throw DC for a cancer mage spell you cast and when making an attack roll with one.

**Spell save DC** = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

**Spell attack modifier** = your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

## Ritual Casting

You can cast a cancer mage spell as a ritual if that spell has the ritual tag and you have the spell prepared.

## Spellcasting Focus

You can use a profane focus as a spellcasting focus for your cancer mage spells.

## Diseased Host

At 1st level, a cancer mage suffers no ill effects of diseases, except for purely cosmetic ones such as boils, pockmarks, watery eyes, blackened skin, hair loss, foul smell, and so on. The cancer mage becomes a carrier of every disease he encounters, though he remains immune to most of their effects.

If the cancer mage is the subject of a *Lesser Restoration* spell or similar magical effect, they may make a Constitution saving throw to resist the effect against the spell save DC of the caster of the spell. If the saving throw fails, the cancer mage has disadvantage on all attacks, including spell attacks, until their next long rest. Furthermore, if the cancer mage has a cancerous companion (see below), they lose all abilities gained from the companion until their next long rest.

## Pathogen Vector

At 2nd level, your affinity for a specific type of disease-carriers grows. Your choice of pathogen vector grants you features at 2nd level and again at 6th, 10th, and 14th level. Two Pathogen Vectors are available in this document: The **Cancerous Companion** and the **Children of the Night**.

## Sneak Attack

Beginning at 3rd level, you know how to strike subtly and exploit a foe's distraction. Once per turn, you can deal an extra 1d6 damage to one creature you hit with an attack if you have advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or a ranged weapon.

You don't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and you don't have disadvantage on the attack roll. If the cancer mage has a cancerous companion (see below), it does not count as another enemy of the target for this purpose.

The amount of the extra damage increases as you gain levels in this class, as shown in the Sneak Attack column of the Cancer Mage table.

If a cancer mage gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses to damage stack.

## Cantrip Versatility (Optional)

Whenever you reach a level in this class that grants the Ability Score Improvement feature, you can replace one cantrip you learned from this class's Spellcasting feature with another cantrip from the cancer mage spell list.

## Tatterdemalion

Gathering scraps of clothing and the last rags used by a patient on their deathbed (a set of materials that fetches 5 gp in the black market), a 5th-level cancer mage is able to make such articles into light armor.

The armor class (AC) of such armor is equal to 12 + their Dexterity modifier. It weighs 4 lb. It is considered to be padded armor, but grants no disadvantage to Stealth checks. Only a 5th-level or higher cancer mage can wear this armor and gain these benefits; other wearers treat it as normal padded armor.

This armor can absorb the properties of another magical light armor once during a short rest. If the cancer mage desires to absorb the properties of another magical armor, they must craft a new set of tatterdemalion with this feature. Users of tatterdemalion armor who do not have the Tatterdemalion feature still have access to the absorbed magical powers of tatterdemalion.

## Contagion

Beginning at 9th level, the touch of a cancer mage carries a *Contagion* spell. The cancer mage has a number of charges of this ability equal to their proficiency bonus per short rest.

## Viral Ally

At 18th level, the cancer mage befriends a disease or virus that infests their body. They supernaturally enhance a disease, making it smarter by giving it a point of their own Intelligence.

The cancer mage can then bestow their viral ally upon a humanoid victim when using the *Contagion* spell in place of another disease granted by the spell. The viral ally can communicate telepathically with the cancer mage.

When the host is successfully infected, the viral ally (and thus the cancer mage) controls its host as surely as with a *Dominate Monster* spell. The host gets no separate saving throw to avoid the effect.

The viral ally is a normal disease, however, and the victim can fight it off with successful Constitution saves or a *Lesser Restoration* spell or similar magical effect, either of which kills the viral ally.

When a viral ally is slayed, the cancer mage regains their missing Intelligence points at their next long rest. A cancer mage can create as many viral allies as they are willing to devote Intelligence points toward.

## Disease Form

At 20th level, a cancer mage gains the ability to transform into a disease once per day. This ability also affects up to 100 pounds of gear the cancer mage is carrying, plus any armors or companions granted by cancer mage or Pathogen Vector features.

As a disease, the cancer mage is intangible and invisible to standard methods of observation, even blindsight. Creatures with the scent ability note a foulness in the air. The cancer mage cannot move, except with the wind (if any), or within a host.

The cancer mage may adopt their disease form as an action, attempting to infect a living creature within 100 feet. A potential victim must succeed at a Fortitude save against the cancer mage's spell save DC to avoid being infected with the cancer mage. Any creature that comes within 10 feet of a cancer mage in disease form is subject to the saving throw to resist infection as well.

Once inside an infected host, the cancer mage deals 1 point of Constitution damage per day after a 24-hour incubation period. The victim has no way of knowing that the cancer mage is anything other than a normal illness.

The cancer mage travels with the victim and is aware of whatever the victim is aware of. A number of times per day equal to the cancer mage's Wisdom bonus, the cancer mage can attempt to force the victim to take one round's worth of actions of the cancer mage's choosing; a successful Wisdom saving throw against the cancer mage's spell save DC allows the victim to resist this.

While controlling their victim, the cancer mage has access to all skills, feats, spells, and special abilities of the host, plus any of their own that they can use in their disembodied state.

The cancer mage can leave their host at any time, allowing the victim to recover normally. The victim can also attempt to force the cancer mage out by making Constitution saves as if the cancer mage were a normal disease.

Medicine checks help the victim as they normally would. A *Lesser Restoration* spell or similar magical effect ejects the cancer mage to an empty space within 5 feet of the victim, reassuming their material form. If the cancer mage fails a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC, they are not ejected and are killed immediately instead.

A cancer mage can remain in disease form as long as they desire, or they can return to their natural form and be done with the disease form for that day.

While in disease form, the cancer mage does not need to eat, sleep, or drink, and they do not age. A cancer mage could remain dormant in a room for a hundred years, then take their material form or infect a new victim.

## Pathogen Vector: Cancerous Companion

*You have a friend within you: the Cancerous Companion. It warns you of danger well ahead and even defends you, provided you host it in return. As your mastery grows, so too will it.*

### Cancerous Companion

At 2nd level, a cancer grows within the cancer mage, forming a large tumor. This cancerous growth gains intelligence and a personality distinct from the cancer mage.

The companion and the cancer mage can communicate telepathically. When needed, the cancerous companion uses the cancer mage's scores for saving throws, ability scores other than Intelligence, and so forth. The cancerous companion gains abilities as the cancer mage gains levels.

The cancerous companion and the cancer mage share hit points, though they only count as a single creature when spells would deal damage in an area.

The cancerous companion's Intelligence score starts at 6. It increases to 8 at 6th level, 12 at 10th level and 14 at 18th level.

### Tendrils of Flesh

At 2nd level, the cancerous companion can use a spell or spell-like ability of the cancer mage on its own as a standard action of its own once per long rest, requiring no action on the part of the cancer mage.

## Two Minds, One Body

At 6th level, mind-affecting spells and effects have a 50% chance of affecting the companion rather than the cancer mage.

## Tendrils of Flesh

At 10th level, the cancerous companion can form a 1-ft. tendril of flesh and is capable of making melee unarmed attacks and use the *Cast a Spell* action to cast spells of casting time of 1 action that use melee spell attacks using a cancer mage's bonus action.

## Unerring Insight

At 14th level, the cancerous companion develops senses of its own, and it is willing to share those senses with you. You gain Blindsight in a radius of 60 feet around you.

## Pathogen Vector: Children of the Night

***Your affinity lies within the children of the night, vermin of numerous sorts that bring humanity disease since times immemorial. They are older than bricks, the wheel and medicine itself, and they can impart their wisdom to you, too.***

## Wisdom Imparted

At 2nd level, you can cast *Speak With Animals* at will, without expending a spell slot, to communicate with rats, bats, vultures, cockroaches, mosquitoes, centipedes and other agents of decay and disease at the GM's discretion.

## Summon the Children

At 6th level, a cancer mage commands the lesser creatures of the world.

As an action, you can call forth a monstrous swarm once per long rest. The swarm appears in an unoccupied space of your choice that you can see within

30 feet of you. When you summon the swarm, specify a type: Insect, Critter or Flying.

The swarming creatures resemble a swarm of animals of your choice and has the “swarm of tiny beasts” type. The swarm dissipates when it drops to 0 hit points, when the cancer mage desires to, or after an hour.

The swarm is friendly to you and your companions. In combat, the swarm shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys your verbal commands (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it takes the Dodge action and uses its move to avoid danger. If you are incapacitated, the spirit can take any action of its choice, not just Dodge.

### Swarming Plagues

*Medium swarm of tiny beasts*

**Armor Class:** 10 + your Wisdom modifier (unarmed defense)

**Hit Points:** 5 + five times your cancer mage level

**Speed:** 30 ft., climb 30 ft, flying 30 ft (Insect and Flying only)

| <b>STR</b> | <b>DEX</b> | <b>CON</b> | <b>INT</b> | <b>WIS</b> | <b>CHA</b> |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 4 (-3)     | 18 (+4)    | 12 (+1)    | 2 (-4)     | 15 (+2)    | 2 (-4)     |

**Damage Resistances:** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Condition Immunities:** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses:** darkvision 60 ft., blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages:** understands the languages you speak

**Proficiency Bonus:** equal to your bonus

## Special Traits

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect or animal. The swarm can't regain hit points or temporary hit points.

## Actions

**Stings (Insect only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 4d4 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage, or 2d4 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. On a hit, a creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or be Poisoned until the start of your next turn.

**Diseased Bites (Critter only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 4d6 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage, or 2d6 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. On a hit, the target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be Deafened for 1 hour.

**Bites and Claws (Flying only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 2d6 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage and 2d6 + your proficiency bonus slashing damage, or 1d6 + your proficiency bonus piercing damage and 1d6 + your proficiency bonus slashing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. On a hit, the target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on Perception (Wisdom) checks relying on sight until the start of your next turn.

## Insect Plague

At 10th level, a cancer mage may cast the spell *Insect Plague* once per long rest.

## Insect Armor

By allowing insects and worms to crawl over their body, a 14th-level cancer mage gains +3 armor class. The cancer mage cannot wear armor heavier than light armor and keep this benefit, however.

## Cancer Mage Spell List

Cantrips

Blade Ward

Chill Touch

Guidance

Infestation

Mage Hand

Message

Minor Illusion

Toll the Dead

## 1st Level Spells

Bane

Cause Fear

Detect Poison and Disease

Disguise Self

Dissonant Whispers

Entangle

False Life

Find Familiar

Hex

Inflict Wounds

Ray of Sickness

Silent Image

Tasha's Caustic Brew

## 2nd Level Spells

Blindness/Deafness

Blur

Borrowed Knowledge

Crown of Madness

Darkness

Enlarge/Reduce

Gust of Wind

Invisibility

Mind Spike

Mirror Image

Ray of Enfeeblement

Silence

Spider Climb

Web

Wither and Bloom

### 3rd Level Spells

Bestow Curse

Clairvoyance

Create Food and Water

Fear

Gaseous Form

Glyph of Warding

Nondetection

Plant Growth

Speak with Dead

Stinking Cloud

Vampiric Touch

Water Breathing

## 4th Level Spells

Blight

Confusion

Conjure Woodland Beings

Control Water

Dominate Beast

Freedom of Movement

Greater Invisibility

Hallucinatory Terrain

Polymorph

Sickening Radiance

## 5th Level Spells

Antilife Shell

Awaken

Cloudkill

Contagion

Dominate Person

Enervation

Insect Plague

Passwall

## 6th Level Spells

Eyebite

Harm

Mental Prison

Otto's Irresistible Dance

Transport via Plants

True Seeing

## 7th Level Spells

Etherealness

Power Word Pain

Prismatic Spray

Symbol

## 8th Level Spells

Abi-Dalzim's Horrid Wilting

Control Weather

Feeblemind

Power Word Stun

## 9th Level Spells

Foresight

Invulnerability

Power Word Kill

Shapechange