Old Diseases
And what they mean today.
Ever wonder what all of those weird diseases listed on genealogical documents are? Well, now you can find out with our list of diseases and their present day meanings.

Ablepsy ................................................. Blindness
Ague ......................................................... Malarial Fever
American plague .................................. Yellow fever
Anasarca ................................................ Generalized massive edema
Aphonia ...................................................... Laryngitis
Aphtha ...................................................... The infant disease "thrush"
Apoplexy ....................................................... Paralysis due to stroke
Asphyxia ....................................................... Cyanotic and lack of oxygen
Atrophy ...................................................... Wasting away or diminishing in size.
Bad Blood ....................................................... Syphilis
Bilious fever ............................................ Typhoid, malaria, hepatitis or elevated temperature and bile emesis
Biliousness .................................................... Jaundice associated with liver disease
Black cancer ............................................ severe diphtheria
Black plague or death ............................. Bubonic plague
Black fever ................................................ Acute infection with high temperature and dark red skin lesions and high mortality rate
Black pox .................................................. Black Small pox
Black vomit .............................................. Vomiting old black blood due to ulcers or yellow fever
Blackwater fever ...................................... Dark urine associated with high temperature
Bladder in throat ...................................... Diphtheria (Seen on death certificates)
Blood poisoning ....................................... Bacterial infection; septicemia
Bloody flux ............................................... Bloody stools
Bloody sweat ............................................ Sweating sickness
Bone shave .............................................. Sciatica
Brain fever ............................................... Meningitis
Breakbone .............................................. Dengue fever
Bright's disease ....................................... Chronic inflammatory disease of kidneys
Bronze John ................................................ Yellow fever
Bule .......................................................... Boil, tumor or swelling
Cachexia .................................................... Malnutrition
Cacogastric .............................................. Upset stomach
Cacospysy .................................................. Irregular pulse
Caduceus ................................................... Subject to falling sickness or epilepsy
Camp fever aka Camp diarrhea .................. Typhus
Canine madness ....................................... Rabies, hydrophobia
Canker ...................................................... Ulceration of mouth or lips or herpes simplex
Catalepsy ................................................... Seizures / trances
Cattarh is a cold (the al at the end makes it an adjective): Nose and throat discharge from cold or allergy

Cerebritis.......................................................... Inflammation of cerebrum or lead poisoning
Chilblain.......................................................... Swelling of extremities caused by exposure to cold
Childbed fever.................................................. Infection following birth of a child
Chin cough....................................................... Whooping cough
Chlorosis .......................................................... Iron deficiency anemia
Cholera .......................................................... Acute severe contagious diarrhea with intestinal lining sloughing
Cholera morbus ................................................ Characterized by nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, elevated temperature, etc. Could be appendicitis
Cholecystitis ..................................................... Inflammation of the gall bladder
Cholelithiasis ..................................................... Gall stones
Chorea ............................................................. Disease characterized by convulsions, contortions and dancing
Cold plague ..................................................... Ague which is characterized by chills
Colic ............................................................... An abdominal pain and cramping
Congestive chills ............................................... Malaria
Consumption ................................................... Tuberculosis
Congestion ....................................................... Any collection of fluid in an organ, like the lungs
Congestive chills ............................................... Malaria with diarrhea
Congestive fever .............................................. Malaria
Corruption ...................................................... Infection
Coryza ............................................................. A cold
Costiveness ........................................................ Constipation
Cramp colic ...................................................... Appendicitis
Crop sickness .................................................. Overextended stomach
Croup ............................................................... Laryngitis, diphtheria, or strep throat
Cyanosis .......................................................... Dark skin color from lack of oxygen in blood
Cynanche ........................................................ Diseases of throat
Cystitis ............................................................ Inflammation of the bladder
Day fever .......................................................... Fever lasting one day; sweating sickness
Debility .............................................................. Lack of movement or staying in bed
Decrepitude ...................................................... Feebleness due to old age
Delirium tremens .............................................. Hallucinations due to alcoholism
Dengue ............................................................. Infectious fever endemic to East Africa
Dentition ........................................................... Cutting of teeth
Deplumation .................................................... Is falling of eyelashes as result of disease (not the disease itself). Tumor of the eyelids which causes hair loss
Diary fever ....................................................... A fever that lasts one day
Diphtheria ........................................................ Contagious disease of the throat
Distemper ........................................................ Usually animal disease with malaise, discharge from nose and throat, anorexia
Dock fever ....................................................... Yellow fever
Dropsy ............................................................. Edema (swelling), often caused by kidney or heart disease
Dropsy of the Brain ........................................... Encephalitis
Dry Bellyache .................................................. Lead poisoning
Dyscrasia .......................................................... An abnormal body condition
Dysentery..........................Inflammation of colon with frequent passage of mucous and blood
Dysorexy................................Reduced appetite
Dyspepsia................................Indigestion and heartburn. Heart attack symptoms
Dysuria..................................Difficulty in urination
Eclampsia..................................Symptoms of epilepsy, convulsions during labor
Ecstasy..................................A form of catalepsy characterized by loss of reason
Edema..................................Nephrosis; swelling of tissues
Edema of lungs..........................Congestive heart failure, a form of dropsy
Eel thing..................................Erysipelas
Elephantiasis..........................A form of leprosy
Encephalitis aka sleeping sickness..Swelling of brain
Enteric fever..........................Typhoid fever
Enterocolitis.........................Inflammation of the intestines
Enteritis...............................Inflammations of the bowels
Epistaxis..................................Nose bleed
Erysipelas..........................Contagious skin disease, due to Streptococci with vesicular and bulbous lesions
Extravasted blood..................Rupture of a blood vessel
Falling sickness....................Epilepsy
Fatty Liver..........................Cirrhosis of liver
Fits......................................Sudden attack or seizure of muscle activity
Flux.....................................An excessive flow or discharge of fluid like hemorrhage or diarrhea
Flux of humour......................Circulation
French pox..........................Syphilis
Gathering...............................A collection of pus
Glandular fever.....................Mononucleosis
Great pox...............................Syphilis
Green fever / Green sickness.....Anemia
Grippe/grip..........................Influenza like symptoms
Grocer's itch..........................Skin disease caused by mites in sugar or flour
Heart sickness......................Condition caused by loss of salt from body
Heat stroke..........................Body temperature elevates because of surrounding environment temperature and body does not perspire to reduce temperature. Coma and death result if not reversed
Hectical complaint.................Recurrent fever
Hematemesis..........................Vomiting blood
Hematuria..............................Bloody urine
Hemiplegy..............................Paralysis of one side of body
Hip gout..................................Osteomyelitis
Horrors..................................Delirium tremens
Hydrocephalus.......................Enlarged head, water on the brain
Hydropericardium..................Heart dropsy
Hydrophobia..........................Rabies
Hydrothorax..........................Dropsy in chest
Hypertrophic..........................Enlargement of any structure, like a scar, muscle, or organ
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impetigo</td>
<td>Contagious skin disease characterized by pustules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanition</td>
<td>Physical condition resulting from lack of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantile paralysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intestinal colic</td>
<td>Abdominal pain due to improper diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaik fever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaundice</td>
<td>Condition caused by blockage of intestines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King's evil</td>
<td>&quot;King's evil&quot; is swelling of joints and lymph glands or scrofula, not necessarily from TB (the touch of a king was supposed to cure it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krunchusten</td>
<td>Whooping cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagrippe</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockjaw</td>
<td>Tetanus or infectious disease affecting the muscles of the neck and jaw. Untreated, it is fatal in 8 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lues disease</td>
<td>Syphilis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lues venera</td>
<td>Venereal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbago</td>
<td>Back pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung fever</td>
<td>Pneumonia or tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung sickness</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying in</td>
<td>Time of delivery of infant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant sore throat</td>
<td>Diphtheria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mania</td>
<td>Insanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marasmus</td>
<td>Progressive wasting away of body, like malnutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membranous Croup</td>
<td>Diphtheria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meningitis</td>
<td>Inflammations of brain or spinal cord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metritis</td>
<td>Inflammation of uterus or purulent vaginal discharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miasma</td>
<td>Poisonous vapors thought to infect the air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk fever</td>
<td>Disease from drinking contaminated milk, like undulant fever or brucellosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk leg</td>
<td>Post partum thrombophlebitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk sickness</td>
<td>Disease from milk of cattle which had eaten poisonous Weeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormal</td>
<td>Gangrene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpewh</td>
<td>Scurvy blisters on the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortification</td>
<td>Gangrene of necrotic tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Fever</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myelitis</td>
<td>Inflammation of the spine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myocarditis</td>
<td>Inflammation of heart muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necrosis</td>
<td>Mortification of bones or tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephrosis</td>
<td>Kidney degeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepritis</td>
<td>Inflammation of kidneys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous prostration</td>
<td>Extreme exhaustion from inability to control physical and mental activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuralgia</td>
<td>Described as discomfort, such as &quot;Headache&quot; was neuralgia in head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostaliga</td>
<td>Homesickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palsy</td>
<td>Paralysis or uncontrolled movement of controlled muscles. It was listed as &quot;Cause of death&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paroxysm</td>
<td>Convulsion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pemphigus ..................................................... Skin disease of watery blisters
Pericarditis .................................................. Inflammation of heart
Peripneumonia ............................................. Inflammation of lungs
Peritonitis .................................................... Inflammation of abdominal area
Petechial fever ............................................. Fever characterized by skin spotting
Phthisis .......................................................... Chronic wasting away or a name for tuberculosis
Plague ............................................................ An acute febrile highly infectious disease with a high fatality rate
Pleurisy ........................................................... Any pain in the chest area with each breath
Podagra .......................................................... Gout
Poliomyelitis ................................................ Polio, Potter’s asthma - Fibroid pthisis
Pott’s disease ................................................ Tuberculosis of spine
Puerperal exhaustion .................................... Death due to childbirth
Puerperal fever .............................................. Elevated temperature after giving birth to an infant
Puking fever .................................................. Milk sickness
Putrid fever .................................................... Diphtheria
Quinsy ............................................................. Tonsillitis
Remitting fever .............................................. Malaria
Rheumatism .................................................... Any disorder associated with pain in joints
Rickets ............................................................ Disease of skeletal system
Rose cold ....................................................... Hay fever or nasal symptoms of an allergy
Rotanny fever .............................................. Child’s disease) ????
Roseola .......................................................... Scarlet colored rash
Rubella .......................................................... German measles - Rubeola the regular measles
Sanguineous crust ......................................... Scab
Scarlatina ....................................................... Scarlet fever
Scarlet fever .................................................. A disease characterized by red rash
Scarlet rash .................................................... Roseola
Sciatica .......................................................... Rheumatism in the hips
Scirrhus ........................................................ Cancerous tumors
Scototomy ....................................................... Dizziness, nausea and dimness of sight
Scrivener’s palsy ............................................ Writer’s cramp
Screws ........................................................... Rheumatism
Scrofula ........................................................ Tuberculosis of neck lymph glands. Progresses slowly with abscesses and pustules develop. Young person’s disease
Scrupox ........................................................ Skin disease, impetigo
Scurvy .......................................................... Lack of vitamin C. Symptoms of weakness, spongy gums and hemorrhages under skin
Septicemia ................................................... Blood poisoning
Shakes ........................................................... Delirium tremens
Shaking .......................................................... Chills, ague
Shingles ........................................................ Viral disease with skin blisters
Ship fever ...................................................... Typhus
Siriasis .......................................................... Inflammation of the brain due to sun exposure
Sloes ............................................................. Milk sickness
Smallpox ........................................................ Contagious disease with fever and blisters
Softening of brain ....................................................... Result of stroke or hemorrhage in the brain, with an end result of the tissue softening in that area
Sore throat distemper ................................................. Diphtheria or quinsy
Spanish influenza ............................................................. Epidemic influenza
Spasms ............................................................... Sudden involuntary contraction of muscle or group of muscles, like a convulsion
Spina bifida ............................................................... Deformity of spine
Spotted fever ................................................................. Either typhus or meningitis
Sprue ................................................................. Tropical disease characterized by intestinal disorders and sore throat
St. Anthony's fire ......................................................... Also erysipelas, but named so because of affected skin areas are bright red in appearance
St. Vitus dance .............................................................. Ceaseless occurrence of rapid complex jerking movements performed involuntarily
Stomatitis ............................................................... Inflammation of the mouth
Stranger's fever .............................................................. Yellow fever
Strangury ................................................................. Painful, interrupted urination caused by spasms of the bladder or urethra
Sudor anglicus ............................................................... Sweating sickness
Summer complaint .......................................................... Diarrhea, usually in infants caused by spoiled milk
Sunstroke .............................................................. Uncontrolled elevation of body temperature due to environment heat. Lack of sodium in the body is a predisposing cause
Swamp sickness ........................................................... Could be malaria, typhoid or encephalitis
Sweating sickness ........................................................ Infectious and fatal disease common to UK in 15th Century
Tetanus ................................................................. Infectious fever characterized by high fever, headache and dizziness
Thrombosis .......................................................... Blood clot inside blood vessel
Thrush ................................................................. Childhood disease characterized by spots on mouth, lips and throat
Tick fever ............................................................. Rocky Mountain spotted fever
Toxemia of pregnancy ......................................................... Eclampsia
Trench mouth ................................................................. Painful ulcers found along gum line. Caused by poor nutrition and poor hygiene
Tussis convulsiva ........................................................... Whooping cough
Typhus ................................................................. Infectious fever characterized high fever, headache, and dizziness
Vaccinia ................................................................. Smallpox
Venesection ............................................................... Bleeding
Viper's dance .............................................................. St. Vitus Dance
Water on brain ............................................................... Enlarged head
White swelling ............................................................. Tuberculosis of the bone
Winter fever ............................................................... Pneumonia
Womb fever .............................................................. Infection of the uterus
Worm fit ................................................................. Convulsions associated with teething, worms, elevated temperature or diarrhea
Yellowjacket .............................................................. Yellow fever