

The Plague Doctor

People in the seventeenth century did not know what caused the plague and many believed it was a punishment from God. They did realise that coming into contact with those infected increased the risk of contracting the disease yourself. Cures and preventative measures were not at all effective.

Suggested Preventions and Cures	How they were supposed to work	What they actually did
Carry Flowers or wear a strong perfume	The smells would help to ward away the disease	Nothing
Drink hot drinks	The victim would then sweat out the disease	Nothing
Carry a lucky charm	The charm would ward off the disease	Nothing
Use leeches to bleed the victim	This would remove infected blood	Nothing
Smoke a pipe of tobacco	The smoke would ward off the disease	Nothing
Give a strong dose of laxatives	This would cause the victim to completely empty his bowels, thus removing the disease.	Strong doses of laxatives can cause death from dehydration.
Coat the victims with mercury and place them in the oven.	The combination of mercury and heat from the oven would kill off the disease.	This could actually increase the likelihood of death - mercury is poisonous and the heat from the oven caused serious burns.

Many doctors, knowing that they could do nothing for plague victims, simply didn't bother trying to treat the disease. Those that did made sure that they were as protected as possible from the disease by wearing the 'uniform' shown below

