

# SMALLPOX



## Description

Smallpox was an infectious disease that was first thought to have originated in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It was believed to have originated in India or Egypt and eventually spread all around the world through immigration and international trade. The disease itself was one of the world's deadliest diseases that claimed the lives of 300 million people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone. It's often notably recognized by the rash, consisting of small red, pustular bumps, that forms on an area of the body and breaks out all over the body and face of those infected. In 1947, Russia began using it as a chemical weapon invented in their biological weapons facility that was founded in 1946. The virus was ultimately eradicated in October 1979 through the use of a vaccine.

## Symptoms and Spread

- First symptoms include high fever, fatigue, headache, chills, abdominal pain, and sometimes vomiting
- After a few days, rashes begin to form starting on the face, upper arms and torso, and then all over the rest of the body
- Can spread through airborne exposure (sneezing or coughing), direct contact with bodily fluids, and indirect contact through sharing things such as clothing and bedding
- Caused by the variola virus
- Can cause severe scars on the face, arms and legs after being infected with the virus

## Prevention and Treatment

- There is no treatment for smallpox that has been tested in people who are sick with the disease that has been proven effective

-more-

- Best prevention was receiving a vaccine (isn't used now because virus has been eradicated)

### **Weaponization in Russia**

- Originated in 1947 during the Cold War
- First smallpox weapons factory was created in Zagorsk, Russia (near Moscow)
- Was produced by injecting small amounts of the virus into chicken eggs
- Pathogen was manufactured and stockpiled in the 1970s and 1980s
- Broke Biological Weapons Warfare Treaty after manufacturing large quantities of the smallpox virus
- Russia admitted to having a smallpox biological weapon stockpile in 1992

### **Eradication**

- Last known natural case of smallpox, in the world, was in Somalia in 1977
- Laboratory accident in England caused a limited outbreak and one person to die in 1978
- Virus was officially deemed eradicated by the CDC in October 1979
- There are smallpox reserves in 2 labs, one in the U.S. and one in Russia

###