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## **History of Human Disease**

### **Stigma of Disease**

Fears of disease, often coupled with ignorance, have led to horrifying treatment of the afflicted. Outbreaks of plague in Europe were often blamed on Jews, who were beaten and driven from their homes. During an epidemic in 17th-century Italy, people suspected of being carriers of the plague were tortured and burned alive. Through the ages people with leprosy were often isolated in leper houses, forbidden to marry, and forced to wear a distinctive cloak or shake a rattle to announce their presence.

Even in supposedly advanced cultures, the stigma of disease remains. In recent years, people with AIDS have heard that their illness was God's punishment for immoral behavior. Many have been ostracized by family, friends, and even physicians who are fearful of contagion. People with AIDS have also been denied housing, medical treatment, and the right to travel to foreign countries.