

Injuries for D&D 5e

A gritty alternative for death saves

Overview

These rules replace death saving throws entirely.

Upon being reduced to 0 hit points, you do not fall unconscious, and may act as normal. Instead, if there is damage remaining, you suffer an Injury. Roll a d6, consulting the Injury Table to determine Injury gained. Injuries last until you recover, as listed in the Recovery column of the table.

Multiple Injuries

If you take damage below 0 hit points and you already have Injuries you've yet to recover from, roll an extra die for each existing Injury, adding it to the total. If your roll would give you an injury you already have, add another die to the roll.

E.g. if you have been Hurlled Back and again take damage that puts you below 0 hit points, roll 2d6 instead.

Injuries at Zero Hit Points

When you take damage while already at 0 hit points, the injury dice rolled are d8s, instead of d6s.

E.g. if you take enough damage to bring you to exactly zero, you do not suffer an injury, but any further damage you take will cause you to roll a d8 for the injury. If you take damage again while at 0, you would roll 2d8. If you are then healed, and are brought to below zero for a third injury, you would roll 3d6.

Critical Hits

If a critical hit causes you to roll on the Injury Table, increase the die type rolled by two steps. E.g. d6 -> d10, or d8 -> d12

Wounds

If you are reduced to zero and the remaining damage equals or exceeds your **Injury Threshold**, you suffer a wound: add an extra die to this and all subsequent injuries!

Injury Threshold = your proficiency bonus multiplied by your constitution score, halved

If the remaining damage is still above your injury threshold, you suffer additional wounds until it no longer is.

All wounds go away on a long rest, but if you receive healing equal to your injury threshold from a single source, one wound goes away early. Healing multiple times your injury threshold in one go removes multiple wounds.

E.g. You are at 1 hit point with no injuries and your injury threshold is 10. If you take 35 points of damage without being killed outright, you would suffer 3 Wounds and then have to roll 4d6 on the injury table for your first injury. If it was a critical hit, you would be rolling 4d10! If you then take 1 point of damage, you'd roll 5d8! If you regain 10 or more hit points, one of the wounds goes away. If

Massive Damage

Massive damage still kills you, but if your injury threshold is higher than your hit point maximum, you can use that instead to determine how much extra damage you can take before instantly dying.

E.g. You are a 1st level wizard with 8 hit points and a Constitution score of 14. Normally you would be killed outright from full health if you ever took 16 points of damage. With these rules, it would take 22 points of damage to kill you from full health, providing a bit of extra breathing room at low levels.

Recovery

Injuries go away after the listed recovery requirement is met - though there may still be permanent consequences. If no recovery requirement is listed then the injury goes away immediately and does not affect subsequent injury rolls. If the requirement is some form of rest, you (or someone else) must spend time during that rest treating your injuries.

More severe injuries will require a few days' rest in a safe place. Characters knocked unconscious will wake up if they regain hit points.

Extended Rest

An extended rest is defined as a period of rest and recovery of no fewer than 3 days in a safe place that is free of stress, danger, and strenuous activity where you are attended by a physician or healer. Typically, this would be in a town or other friendly and secure location. You cannot normally take an extended rest in hostile territory like the wilderness or a dungeon.

Injuries and Interrupted Long Rests

If you sustain an Injury severe enough that it recovers on a long rest or longer while attempting to take a long rest, then the rest doesn't remove injuries. You regain hit dice, spell slots, and class features as normal.

Special Injury Effects

Woe

This injury was particularly unlikely to occur - add a d10 to the result!

Exhaustion

Make a DC 15 Constitution save or gain a level of exhaustion. You recover from exhaustion inflicted by Injuries through normal means - removing an Injury does not remove any exhaustion it gave you.

Death's Door

This injury has put you at the brink of death. You cannot regain hit points or gain the benefits of a short or long rest. Death's Door can only be removed with an emergency surgery or high level magic, such as *Heal*.

Surgery takes one hour and requires a surgeon to make a DC 15 medicine check to succeed, and the patient to make a DC 15 Constitution save. If both succeed, the patient lives, the injury is removed, and they regain hit points equal to their level. If both fail the patient dies.

With one success, both must reroll, but the DC for both rolls increments by 1. The medicine check has advantage if the surgery takes place in an exceptionally clean location. Only people with proficiency in Medicine can attempt surgery, and they require a medicine kit.

Nonlethal Damage

If a creature who can suffer injuries (i.e. a player character) is reduced to zero and the attacker is attempting to do so nonlethally, the victim doesn't suffer an injury, but must make a Constitution save. The DC equals 5 plus half the damage that remains. If they fail, they are unconscious for d4 hours.

Injury Table

Result	Injury	Effect	Recovery
1	-	Woe.	-
2	Shattered Nerves	You are Frightened of the one who injured you until they die or you recover. You can attempt a DC 15 Wisdom save on your turn to overcome the fear until your next turn.	Short rest / attacker dies
3	Winded	On your next turn, you cannot both move <i>and</i> act, only one or the other.	End of your next turn
4	Retaliation	Without using your reaction, you may make a weapon attack or cast a cantrip against the creature that had you make this roll, or the nearest hostile creature.	-
5	Battlescar	A part of you is violently and forever marked.	Short rest
6	Hurled Back	Exhaustion. You're knocked back 15 ft. and fall prone with a sickening thud.	Short rest
7	Smashed Mouth	Blood, spit and teeth go flying everywhere. Gain temp HP equal to your level.	Long rest
8	Black Eye	You are Blinded until the end of your next turn.	Long rest
9	Crippling Blow	Exhaustion. You are Stunned by the pain.	End of your next turn
10	-	Woe.	-
11	Concussion	Unconscious. Wake up at the end of your turn after 1d4 rounds.	Long rest
12	Lost Finger	One of your fingers is severed or torn off. You drop whatever's in that hand.	Long rest
13	Broken Nose	You're unable to use your sense of smell.	Long rest
14	Head Trauma	Exhaustion. Unconscious for 1d10 minutes. You gain a new Flaw: you have memory issues, a tic, or other mannerism.	Long rest
15	Cold Fury	The next attack roll you make that hits will critically hit.	-
16	Broken Toes	You immediately fall Prone. You can no longer Dash.	Long rest
17	Broken Ribs	Exhaustion. You cannot add Dexterity to your AC or to Dexterity saving throws.	Extended rest
18	Bloody Mess	Exhaustion. You're gonna need a lot of stitches after this!	Long rest
19	Broken Hand	Cannot hold anything with that hand nor use it for somatic spellcasting.	Extended rest
20	-	Woe.	-
21	Adrenaline	Lose one level of exhaustion. Gain temp HP equal to twice your level. You have advantage on all d20 rolls until the end of your next turn.	-
22	Severed Ear	Disadvantage on perception checks relying on hearing.	Long rest*
23	Gouged Eye	Disadvantage on perception checks relying on sight and on ranged attack rolls.	Extended rest*
24	Surprise Recovery	Recover from a random injury.	-

25	Broken Arm	Exhaustion. Cannot use that arm. You can still hold items, but cannot attack using that arm, nor benefit from an equipped shield, nor use it for Somatic spellcasting.	Extended rest
26	Broken Leg	Exhaustion. You immediately fall Prone. From now on, your walking speed is halved and you cannot Dash.	Extended rest
27	Shattered Jaw	You suffer great pain when talking. Verbal spellcasting requires a DC 15 Concentration check. If you fail, the spell fails and the spell slot is wasted.	Extended rest
28	Skull Fracture	Exhaustion. Unconscious for 1d4 hours. Your head now has a nasty dent. Make DC 15 Intelligence save or gain a form of indefinite madness.	Extended rest
29	Severed Arm	Exhaustion. Your arm is cut or torn off, or otherwise requires amputation.	Extended rest*
30	-	Woe.	-
31	Frenzy	You experience a moment of boundless fury. You may immediately take an extra turn.	-
32	Ruptured Organ	Exhaustion. Death's Door. You suffer an injury that could easily lead to your death.	Extended rest
33	Mental Breakdown	Exhaustion. Death's Door. You are a nervous wreck. Roll for indefinite madness.	Extended rest
34	Severed Leg	Exhaustion. Death's Door. Your Speed is halved, you cannot Dash, and you are permanently Prone.	Extended rest*
35	Shattered Spine	Exhaustion. Your walking Speed is reduced to 5 and you are permanently Prone.	Extended rest*
36-40	Heroic Death	You know your time has come. Immediately take a turn, during which time you have no exhaustion and have advantage on all rolls. Afterwards, you die gloriously.	<i>Revivify</i>
41-45	Sudden Death	You die immediately, with only enough time to utter your final words.	<i>Revivify</i>
46+	Annihilation	You die instantly and your broken body is destroyed. Nothing remains of your passing but bloody pulp and a grisly stain.	<i>Resurrection</i>

* Though the extended rest can't actually undo the damage the Injury inflicted, it allows you enough time to get used to it. Once you recover, it no longer contributes to Injury rolls, but the mechanical effects continue to apply. Your character may lose their leg, but they'll learn to live without it. At the dungeon master's discretion, you may be able to find a way to replace a lost limb through the use of a prosthetic. Only *Regenerate* can actually restore lost limbs, missing eyes and ears, but a Shattered Spine can be healed with *Greater Restoration* or *Heal*.

Difficulty

Though these rules make it harder to die immediately, you can expect your enemies to attack you until you are dead (or unconscious if you are lucky).

That said, due to still being conscious while at 0 HP, you will have more opportunities to reposition and avoid immediate death in the short term, but the front liners will not last long, even if healed after attacks.

Furthermore, Injuries generally linger for the whole adventure and the consequences escalate as you start collecting them. The more encounters you have, the harder things will get if you don't take time to recover.

For a Heroic Experience...

These rules were intended for a gritty dungeon delving experience. For a more heroic experience, you might want to consider having Injuries that normally heal on an extended rest instead heal on a long rest.

On the Matter of Healing Magic

D&D 5th edition is generally unclear about how low level healing magic actually works. Arguments can certainly be made that a spell like *Cure Wounds* should be able to heal a black eye or broken jaw. That said, these rules assume that most healing magic (and certainly low level magic) has limitations on what injuries can reasonably be healed, such as requiring that the injury is visible to the caster (thus broken bones cannot be healed, for instance).

Under these rules, healing magic that simply restores hit points is mostly just healing cuts and bruises, and is unable to reverse severe damage. Only more powerful magic or recovery through natural healing can heal those sorts of injuries. Healing magic can prevent severe injuries, but not reverse them. As far as these rules are concerned, hit points represent how much punishment your body can take before you pass beyond the point where normal healing magic can help you. After you are reduced to zero hit points, you're on the brink of losing the fight, and your life is in jeopardy.

Lesser Restoration

The target recovers from one injury that recovers on a short rest (or sooner). Upcast to remove one extra injury per additional level. Long rest injuries count as two short rest injuries. Extended rest injuries cannot be removed this way.

Greater Restoration

The target recovers from any single injury. Upcast to remove one extra injury per additional level.

Heal

The target recovers from all injuries.

Resurrection

If you are brought back to life through the use of resurrection magic such as *Revivify* or *Raise Dead*, all injuries are removed. Any missing body parts remain missing, unless the spell specifies otherwise.