

GLOSSARY

Aerosols	Nebulized particles suspended in a gas or air.
Agent	As in “microbial agent” – an entity that has an effect.
Antibiotic	A substance able to destroy or interfere with the development of a microbe, typically a bacterium. An antimicrobial agent, derived from cultures of a micro-organism or produced semisynthetically; used to treat infections.
Antigen	A substance, usually a protein, that causes the formation of an antibody and reacts specifically with that antibody.
Antisepsis	Destruction of micro-organisms to prevent infection, usually by chemical means.
Antiviral agents	Prevent the growth or release of viruses.
Asepsis	1. The absence of germs. 2. Surgical asepsis, protection against infection before, during, or after surgery by the use of sterile technique.
Asymptomatic	Without symptoms.
Commensal	A microbe that lives in or on a host without causing disease.
Coronavirus	A member of a family of viruses that includes several types capable of causing acute respiratory illnesses in animals or humans. The SARS virus is a novel coronavirus, not previously described.
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid – the genetic material that codes the instructions to make living cells.
Ecology	The study of the interaction between living organisms and their environment.
Ectopic pregnancy	A pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus.
Endemic	Of a disease or micro-organism that tends to persist in a geographic area or population.
Epidemic	A disease that spreads rapidly through a population; a disease that recurs periodically.
Epidemiology	The study of the occurrence, distribution, and causes of disease.
Gastroenteritis	Inflammation of the stomach and intestines accompanying gastro-intestinal disorders. Symptoms are anorexia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, and diarrhoea.
Host	An organism in which another, usually parasitic, organism is nourished and harbored. (eg humans are hosts to many commensal bacteria living on the skin, as well as to pathogens).
Incidence	The number of new cases - eg in a year.
Immunological memory	Cells of the immune system, having once responded to a specific infection or vaccination – are primed to respond quickly with a protective response if exposed again to the same or a similar infection.

Immunology	The study of how cells of the immune system, such as lymphocytes, recognise antigens and make antibodies eg to protect against infection.
Imported case	A case of disease brought in from another place or country.
MBM	Meat-and-bone meal – used as an animal food supplement.
Microbiology	The branch of biology concerned with the study of micro-organisms, including algae, bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi, and rickettsia.
Otitis media	Inflammation in the middle ear, commonly known as ‘middle ear infection’.
Pandemic	A (severe) disease occurring throughout the world and affecting large numbers of people.
Parasite	An organism living in or on and obtaining nourishment from another organism.
Pathogen	A microbe capable of causing a disease.
Prevalence	The number of cases of a conditions at a point of time ie includes pre-existing as well as new cases.
Protein	Produced by instructions from RNA – specific proteins may be structural or, as enzymes, facilitate chemical reactions.
RNA	Ribonucleic acid – transcribed from DNA in living cells – translates instructions into proteins. Some viruses have RNA rather than DNA genes.
Sentinel	On guard to detect an invasion (of a disease).
Spores	A temporary form assumed by some bacteria to resist heat, drying, and chemicals; diseases caused by spore-forming bacteria include anthrax, botulism, gas gangrene, and tetanus.
Sputum	Material coughed up; it contains mucus, cellular debris and some microbes.
Surveillance	To detect, watch over, supervise or observe persons with a health condition.
Vaccine	Attenuated or killed microbes (or antigens) administered to induce active immunity to infectious disease.
Vector	Something that carries or transmits a pathogen, eg mosquitos are vectors for malaria.
Viral load	Viral burden – the number of viruses (eg in a person).
Virology	The study of viruses and viral diseases.
Virulence	The capacity of a micro-organism to produce disease.
Virus	A micro-organism smaller than a bacterium that replicates only within a cell of a living plant or animal host.