

## 22. Glossary of Terms

**Additional Precautions:** Infection prevention and control interventions that are carried out in addition to Routine Precautions for certain pathogens or clinical presentation based on the method of transmission (i.e. contact, droplet, airborne).

**Aerosol:** Particles of respirable size (less than 10um) generated by both human and environmental sources that can remain viable and airborne for extended periods.

**Antibiotic Resistant Organism (ARO):** a microorganism that has developed resistance to the action of several antimicrobial agents and that is of special clinical or epidemiologic significance due to the limitations of the treatment options. See 'MRO'

**Asepsis:** The absence of pathogenic (disease-producing) microorganisms. Can be further divided into:

- Aseptic technique - practices designed to render and maintain objects and areas free from microorganisms. Also called 'sterile technique'
- Clean technique - refers to practices that reduce the number of microorganisms and minimizes the risk of transmission from personnel or environment to the patient.

**Bacteria:** Commonly known as "germs". Bacteria are very small microorganisms only visible through a microscope. There are many varieties, only some of which cause disease. See 'microorganisms'.

**Bioburden:** The amount of microorganisms on a piece of medical equipment before cleaning and sterilization.

**Carrier:** An individual who is found to be persistently colonized (culture-positive) for a particular organism, at one or more body sites, but may have no signs or symptoms of infection. See 'colonization'.

**Chemical indicator (CI):** A monitoring device that is designed to respond with a chemical or physical change during the sterilization process. CIs do not verify sterility but they do assist in the detection of potential sterilization failures.



**Cleaning:** The physical removal of foreign material from an object or item using water and mechanical action, with or without detergents. Cleaning removes rather than kills microorganisms.

**Colonization:** Presence of microorganisms in or on a host, with growth and multiplication but without tissue invasion or cellular injury. See 'carrier.'

**Contamination:** The presence of microorganisms on inanimate objects (e.g. clothing, surgical instruments) or microorganisms transported transiently on body surfaces such as hands, or in substances (e.g. water, food, milk).

**Decontamination:** To remove disease-causing microorganisms and leave an item safe for further handling.

**Drug identification number (DIN):** A number assigned to a product by Health Canada identifying that it has been approved for use in Canada.

**Disinfection:** The inactivation of disease producing microorganisms on non-living items. It rarely kills all bacterial spores. It is divided into low/medium/high level depending on the use of the object before and after the disinfection process. See Spaulding Classifications.

**Droplet:** Small particles of moisture generated when a person coughs or sneezes, or when water is converted to a fine mist by an aerator or pump spray. They can be a means of carrying infectious microorganisms. They quickly settle out of the air and therefore are only an infectious concern for those in close proximity (6 feet/ 2 metres) to the source.

**Flora:** The human body contains a large number of bacteria, most of them performing tasks that are useful or even essential to human survival. Normal flora under normal circumstances do not cause disease.

**Fungus:** An organism that is filamentous or thread like in structure and reproduces through spores (e.g. yeast, mushrooms).

**Health care associated infections (HCAI):** Infections related to and attributable to interaction with some form of health care.

**Health care worker (HCW):** An individual providing or supporting health care services that will put them in contact with patients. This also means they will be exposed to germs in the workplace and may carry germs to other people in the workplace and home after work.

**Infection:** The entry and multiplication of an infectious agent in the tissues of the host:

- Inapparent (asymptomatic, subclinical) infection: an infectious process running a course similar to that of clinical disease but below the threshold of clinical symptoms.
- Apparent (symptomatic, clinical) infection: one resulting in clinical signs and symptoms (disease).

**Infectivity:** The ability of a pathogen to establish an infection.

**Immune:** Having a resistance to infection by a specific pathogen.

**Mask:** surgical/procedure mask is a disposable paper mask worn on the face to create a barrier to limit exposure to mucous membranes and inhalation of microorganisms into the respiratory tract. The protection may be for the wearer or for those in the health care environment when droplet transmitted organisms may be present or if there is risk of splashes or sprays to the face.

**Microorganism:** An organism that can be seen only with the aid of a microscope and that typically consists of only a single cell. Microorganisms include bacteria, protozoans, and certain algae and fungi, also called germs. See 'bacteria'.

**MRSA:** Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

**Multi-Drug Resistant Organism (MDRO):** Bacteria that have developed or acquired resistance to numerous antibiotics. See 'ARO'.

**Nosocomial Infection:** Infections where acquisition can be related to hospitalization. An infection occurring in a hospitalized or discharged patient, 72 hours or more after a hospital admission (with no evidence that infection was present or incubating at the time of admission).

**Patients:** For purposes of this manual, 'patients' refers to persons receiving care in acute care settings, clients in home care and residents in continuing care facilities.

**Parasite:** An organism that grows, feeds and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host.

**Pathogenic:** Having the capacity to cause disease.



**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Equipment worn to protect a person from exposures to workplace hazards. In health care settings these exposures include blood and body fluids. Personal protective equipment in infection prevention and control in health care includes gloves, aprons, gowns, face shields, respirators and masks.

**Respirator:** N95 respirators block 95% of the small particles that cause infections transmitted by the airborne route when properly fitted and used.

**Routine Practices:** Basic standards in infection prevention and control that are required for safe patient care. It is based on the concept that all patients are potentially infectious, even when showing no symptoms. Routine practices is a standard to be used when there is any risk of contact with blood, body fluids and secretions, mucous membranes or non-intact skin.

**RSV:** Respiratory Syncytial Virus

**Single use disposable device:** A device that has been designed by the manufacturer for single-use only.

**Sterilization:** A validated process that kills all pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi, viruses and spores.

**Susceptibility:** Likelihood to be affected with a disease, infection or condition.

**Virulence:** A measure of the strength of a microorganism. A factor that determines whether infection occurs and how severe the resulting disease symptoms may be. The degree of virulence is also an indicator for how rapidly and extensively the organism is likely to spread.

**Virus:** An infectious organism that in most cases cannot be seen through a standard lab microscope. It is a parasite dependent on nutrients inside the host cells for its metabolic and reproductive needs.