

GLOSSARY Nº6: Agents of infection

Infections are caused by **infection agents** (also known as **microorganisms**, because they are usually very small and only can be seen using special equipment, such as a microscope).

But not all germs cause infections. The ones that cause infection (disease) are called **pathogens**



Agents of Infection	What is it?	Examples of disease causing agents
Bacteria	Bacteria are small and simple organisms , only visible with a microscope. Only some bacteria are pathogenic, meaning that they cause disease, namely infections. <u>Pathogenic bacteria attach and invade cells, taking advantage of their food to grow and multiply.</u>	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> , <i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i> , <i>Streptococcus viridans</i> , <i>E. coli</i> , <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>
Fungi (plural of fungus)	Fungi are primitive organisms , although more complex than bacteria and virus. Only about 50% are harmful to human health (pathogenic). <u>Individuals are more likely to develop a fungal infection if they have a weakened immune system.</u>	<i>Aspergillus niger</i> , <i>Aspergillus flavus</i> , <i>Candida albicans</i> , <i>Pneumocystis carinii</i>
Pathogen	A microorganism that is harmful to health and can cause disease.	Bacteria, Fungus, Virus
Virus	Viruses are combinations of proteins and genetic material (which may be also protected by envelopes that encase the genetic material). They <u>are not living organisms and they can only multiply inside living cells.</u>	<i>Influenza virus</i> (e.g <i>Influenza pneumonia</i>), EBV (Epstein-Barr Virus), Measles virus, Mumps virus