

# Infection Control Definitions

**Throughout the Healthcare sector and cleaning industry, there are a lot of words and phrases that get thrown around, which are often detrimental to understand due to the importance of proper cleaning practices. Here are a few definitions of terms that are vital to the world of effective and proper infection control practices.**

## — Infection Control

The official definition for infection control is the 'discipline concerned with preventing healthcare-associated infections', however, infection control should be practiced in any sector which are at risk of transmitting infections to the general public. These could include education, restaurants, concerts, holiday or theme parks, retail, and many more. In layman's terms, infection control is the monitoring and procedures put in place to combat infection through the use of education, policies, and the correct decontamination products.

## — Bacteria

Bacteria are living organisms that can live in every possible habitat, including extreme environments such as hot springs and deep sea. They can live independently from other living organisms, and multiple types of bacteria are harmless to humans, and are often beneficial to the human body. The bacteria which are harmful to humans, however, are known to be deadly.

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Bacteria spreads by reproducing and can only be killed if the reproduction process is stopped.

#### – Bactericide

A substance which kills bacteria. Antibacterial sprays will include such a substance.

#### – Virus

A virus cannot live without a living organism, as they are a parasite that must infect a living cell to survive and spread. It spreads by duplicating itself inside another organism's cells. Unlike bacteria, all viruses are harmful to the human body and the only way to remain healthy is the prevention of viruses from entering the body. Viruses are also a lot harder to kill than bacteria. To efficiently kill a virus, the cleaning solution must be able to break through a viruses' defensive cell wall and disrupt the genetic material.

#### – Viricide

A substance which kills viruses. Generally bought antibacterial sprays might not include this substance and will therefore not be able to kill viruses.

#### – HCAs

HCAs (or HAIs) are Healthcare Associated Infections. These are infections or diseases that are transmitted through a hospital or care setting and are extremely detrimental to health

and NHS funding. It's estimated that 300,000 people a year in the UK are affected by HCAs, costing the NHS approximately £1 billion a year.

#### – Human Error

The phrase human error relates to errors or mistakes that are made in any sector that is a result of a human's actions. Human error is an inevitable part of daily life. Human error can occur for many reasons but has been shown to be detrimental to the healthcare industry. Human error is one of the leading causes of HCAs (see above), and causes a huge risk to the welfare of the general public who are vulnerable.

#### – Decontamination

Decontamination, differing from 'infection control', is not specified to the removal of germs or harmful pathogens, and is a more general term for the removal or neutralisation of dangerous substances. Outside a healthcare setting, decontamination might be defined as the removal of radioactivity or chemicals, for example.

#### – Fogging

Fogging is a colloquial term for the sanitisation of the air and any airborne pathogens using a specialised 'fogger'. Typically, these fogging machines are specially made to disperse sanitisation solution into the air in mist or 'fog' form to tackle harmful airborne pathogens.

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