

3.1.1 Communicable (infectious) diseases

AQA GCSE Biology (Higher) Question and answer notes

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How to use these notes

These notes cover everything you need to know for this part of the specification. They have been written in question-answer format to make them easier for you to study from.

In order to study successfully, I recommend you do the following for each question and answer:

- Read it carefully and make sure you **understand** it.
- **Memorise** the answer.
- **Practice** applying your understanding to past exam questions.

A good way to memorise information is to use **retrieval practice**. This is when you practise retrieving information from your memory. You could do this by making a flashcard for each question with the question on one side and the answer on the other. Or you could use a flashcard app. Alternatively, use a sheet of paper to cover up the answer so you can only see the question. Try to answer the question and then check how you did.

You should practise retrieving each answer from your memory until you can do it perfectly. Even once you can retrieve the answer perfectly, your ability to retrieve it will probably fade as time passes without practising. Therefore you will need to keep going back to the questions that you have previously mastered and practising them again. However, each time you re-learn the answer, the memory will be stronger and will last longer than the time before.

What is an infectious disease?

An infectious disease is a disease caused by a harmful organism living in or on the body.

What is the general word for organisms that cause disease?

The general word for organisms that cause disease is 'pathogens'.

What types of organisms can be pathogens?

Organisms within the following groups can be pathogens:

- Bacteria
- Fungi
- Protists
- Viruses (note: technically, viruses are not considered to be organisms)

What types of organisms can be infected by pathogens?

All organisms can be infected by pathogens, including all animals and all plants.

What are some of the main ways that pathogens spread from one organism to another?

Some of the main ways that pathogens spread from one organism to another are:

- Direct contact
- Through water
- Through air

What might pathogens do after they enter an organism?

Once pathogens enter an organism, they may reproduce rapidly inside the organism. They may also produce poisonous proteins called toxins which damage tissues and cause disease.

How do viruses live and reproduce?

Viruses enter living cells and use the cells to enable them to live and reproduce. This causes damage to the cells.