



General Definitions

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In the German-speaking parts of the world, hygiene is the science of the preservation of health and prevention of disease. According to the more up-to-date definition, hygiene comprises all measures for prevention and control of infections.

The World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health (1946) is: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.

In other parts of the world, hygiene mainly focuses on cleaning, disinfection and sterilization. All other parts are summarized under “infection prevention and control”.

Infection Prevention and Control or Hygiene Comprises the Following:

- Any measures to combat and destruct pathogenic microorganisms, e.g. disinfection, sterilization, antimicrobial therapy, etc.
- Protection against and prevention of infections by laws and regulations in hospitals, the public health system, enforcing quality in the medical environment and vaccinations.
- Communication and networking to disseminate knowledge and information to protect against infection.

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- Teaching, educating and training of all people working in the health-care systems and beyond.
 - *Epidemiology*: Description of the incidence, distribution and control of a disease in a population including the detection of the source and cause of epidemics of infectious diseases. Epidemiology is the study of the occurrence of diseases, their course and their distribution in a population. Epidemiological descriptive numbers to measure the burden of (infectious) causes of disease are mortality, morbidity, incidence and prevalence of a disease (see Chap. 24 on epidemiology).