

BUGS: Clinical Microbiology made Simple (or, All you Need to Know on 3 sides of A4)

NB This crib-sheet only deals with bacteria and not other pathogens like viruses and fungi.

There are three sections:

1. GRAM STAINING
2. CLINICALLY IMPORTANT BACTERIA
3. WHICH BACTERIA CAUSE WHICH INFECTIONS?

1. GRAM STAINING

Bacteria can be seen under the microscope by performing a Gram stain.

The Gram stain appearance depends on the cell wall structure. Since this is also relevant to antibiotic sensitivity, Gram stain appearance is incredibly helpful in deciding on an antibiotic even before you know the full identity of the organism.





Gram Positives look Purple under the microscope.

Gram nEgatives look rEd under the microscope

The *shape* of the organism is described as cocci (round) or bacilli/rods (rod-shaped)

2. CLINICALLY IMPORTANT BACTERIA

Some of the *most important* bacteria you will come across in clinical medicine according to Gram stain appearance:

	Gram positive	Gram negative
Cocci	Staphylococci  <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> Other staphylococci Streptococci <i>Streptococcus pyogenes (Group A)</i> <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> Enterococci	<i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> (meningococcus)  <i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i> (gonococcus)
Bacilli	 <i>Clostridium difficile</i> <i>Listeria sp</i>	<i>E. coli</i> <i>Klebsiella</i>  <i>Pseudomonas</i>

In addition, remember anaerobes –grow in the absence of oxygen. Live in the bowel where there is little oxygen. They are a mixture of organisms with different Gram stain properties but are usually all lumped together since the antibiotic treatment for all is the same – see Drugs crib-sheet

Key facts about clinically important bacteria from the Table

1: GRAM POSITIVE COCCI

- a) **Staphylococci**
- b) **Streptococci**
- c) **Enterococci**

a) *Staphylococci*: ***Staphylococcus aureus***. A virulent pathogen which causes skin and soft tissue infections, cellulitis/wound infections, deep abscesses, vertebral discitis, osteomyelitis and endocarditis in intravenous drug users. Usual treatment: flucloxacillin. If resistant, that means it is MRSA.

Other staphylococci – often all lumped together and called ‘coagulase negative staphylococci’. They are normal skin flora. Rarely cause infection but when they do it is when they are attached to a biomaterial like a central line, a joint prosthesis or a prosthetic heart valve.

b) *Streptococci*: There are lots but the two you will come across most are ***Streptococcus pyogenes*** (aka the ‘Group A strep’) and ***Streptococcus pneumoniae***.

Streptococcus pyogenes (Group A strep) is a very dangerous pathogen and causes cellulitis, wound infections, bacterial tonsillitis (which untreated can lead to glomerulonephritis and rheumatic fever), scarlet fever, necrotising fasciitis, puerperal fever (post-childbirth – now rare in the UK thankfully but used to be a major cause of death).

Streptococcus pneumoniae - the most important cause of community acquired pneumonia. Another dangerous pathogen. Used to be called the ‘old man’s friend’ because it took elderly people’s lives quickly and in a less horrible way than many causes of death before modern medicine. It is *also a very important cause of bacterial meningitis*.

c) *Enterococci*. Live in the bowel (hence *entero*). Therefore a common cause of UTI and also associated with bowel sepsis. Relatively low-grade pathogens unlike those described above.

2. GRAM POSITIVE BACILLI

The important ones to remember are:

- a) *Clostridium difficile* which causes antibiotic-associated diarrhoea
- b) *Listeria* which is a cause of meningitis in neonates, immunocompromised and elderly people. It can also infect women in pregnancy.

3. GRAM NEGATIVE COCCI

The important ones to remember are:

- a) *Neisseria meningitidis* (meningococcus) causes sepsis and meningitis
- b) *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (gonococcus) causes gonorrhoea

4. GRAM NEGATIVE BACILLI

- a) *E. coli*, *Klebsiella* and other 'coliforms'
- b) *Pseudomonas*

- a) *E. coli* lives in the bowel, so a common cause of UTI, urinary sepsis and abdominal sepsis. Lots of other Gram-negative bacilli which also live in the bowel are sometimes lumped together with *E. coli* as 'coliforms', which all behave pretty similarly. Examples: *Klebsiella*, *Proteus*, *Serratia* etc. Can be extremely **antibiotic resistant**, especially *Klebsiella*.
- b) *Pseudomonas*. This is an environmental organism which like to live in damp places like taps, mop buckets etc. It's an opportunistic pathogen so doesn't normally cause infection in healthy people, but it can cause serious sepsis in immunocompromised/critical care patients. It's important remember *Pseudomonas* because it's very antibiotic resistant and only certain antibiotics cover it. These will be listed in the 'Drugs' cribsheet.

3. Which bacteria cause what infections?

Clinical infection	Most important/common pathogens
Skin and soft tissue infections	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> <i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i> (Group A strep)
Urinary tract	<i>Escherichia coli</i> Enterococci (bowel organisms excluding anaerobes)
Abdominal sepsis	<i>Escherichia coli</i> Enterococci Anaerobes (bowel organisms)
Community Acquired Pneumonia	<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> Also, some 'atypical' organisms which do not stain by Gram stain, such as <i>Legionella</i> , <i>Mycoplasma</i> and <i>Chlamydia</i>
Hospital Acquired Pneumonia	<i>Pseudomonas</i> <i>Escherichia coli</i> <i>Klebsiella</i> /other coliforms <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (Note these often tend to be resistant strains)
Bacterial Meningitis	<i>Neisseria meningitidis</i> <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> <i>Listeria</i>

That's it! If you're familiar with these three pages you'll be in a great position for the Drugs crib-sheet 😊.