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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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in·fect  (in-fěkt)

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tr.v. **in·fect·ed, in·fect·ing, in·fects**

1. To invade and proliferate in, often resulting in disease. Used of microorganisms or other infectious agents: *people who were infected with salmonella.*
2. To cause the invasion of (a cell, for example) with a microorganism or other infectious agent: *The researchers infected the bacteria with a virus.*
3. To transmit a pathogen or disease to: *The sick child infected the entire class.*
4. To contaminate with a pathogenic microorganism or agent: *Cholera infected the water supply.*
5. *Computers* To become transmitted to and copied on (a hard drive, for example). Used of a virus or other harmful software.
6. To affect by transmission or be communicated to. Used of an idea, emotion, or attitude: *"His fear infected me, and ... I followed as fast as I could" (W.H. Hudson).*

[Middle English *infecten*, to afflict with disease, from Latin *īnficere*, *īnfect-*, to stain, infect (*in-*, in; see [IN-](#)² + *facere*, to do; see [dhē-](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)).]

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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