



Memorandum

Date: September 7, 2006
From: John Beck
Subject: **Contamination Terminology**

Aseptic - free from living microbial organisms (bacteria, yeast, mold, etc.) that cause disease, fermentation or putrefaction. It can also mean a method or technique for preventing infection or contamination.

Sepsis / Septic - local or generalized invasion of the body (blood stream) by pathogenic microorganisms or their toxins (bacteria, yeast; mold, virus).

Sanitize - to free from dirt, germs, etc. by cleaning or sanitizing/disinfecting using some sort of cleaning agent. When you sanitize you effectively reduce the microbial load of an object but you do not remove all microorganisms - thus, the object is not sterile.

Sterile - free from living microorganisms. In this sense **sterile** and **aseptic** are interchangeable.

Sterilize - to destroy all microorganisms by a number of methods: steam, heat, irradiation, filtration, gas, etc. When you sterilize you also remove the vegetative state (spores) of the bacteria.