

Contents

	Preface	ix
1	The Background	1
1.1	Meet the cast	1
1.2	Food for microbes	13
1.3	Basic molecular biology	15
2	Microbes and Health	19
2.1	Microbes in the body	19
2.2	Defences against infection	26
3	Microbial Infections	33
3.1	Diseases of the past	33
3.2	Diseases of the present	45
3.3	Opportunist infections	50
3.4	'New' diseases	52
3.5	Animal diseases	58
4	Prevention and Cure	63
4.1	Epidemics	63
4.2	Antibiotics	72
5	Microbes and Food – Friend and Foe	83
5.1	Food spoilage	83
5.2	Food preservation	86
5.3	Fermented foods	88
5.4	Food poisoning and food-borne diseases	91

CONTENTS

6	Microbes and the Environment	97
6.1	Water	100
6.2	Soil	107
6.3	Plants	108
6.4	Biodegradation	112
6.5	Extreme environments	116
7	Microbial Evolution – Genes and Genomes	119
7.1	Evolution and inheritance	119
7.2	Horizontal gene transfer	122
7.3	Variation in gene expression	128
7.4	Gene cloning and sequencing	131
8	Microbial Development and Communication	141
8.1	Cell division	141
8.2	Motility	145
8.3	Biofilms	146
8.4	Quorum sensing	150
8.5	Bacterial sporulation	152
8.6	Multicellular behaviour	153
8.7	Biological clocks	156
9	Microbial Biotechnology – Practical Uses of Microbes	159
9.1	Amino acids	160
9.2	Biofuels	161
9.3	Microbes and metals	163
9.4	Oil spills	166
9.5	Sewage and water treatment	168
9.6	Antibiotics and other medical products	170
9.7	Vaccines	172
9.8	Proteins	177
10	Controversies and Speculations	181
10.1	Evolution and the origins of life	181
10.2	Is there life elsewhere in the universe?	186
10.3	Creating new life	187
10.4	Is it safe? Assessment of risk, risk versus benefit	187
10.5	Superbugs and killer viruses	192
10.6	Microbes and climate change	193
10.7	Microbes and non-infectious diseases	195
10.8	Epilogue	200

CONTENTS

Appendix 1: Explanations	201
A1.1 Monomers and polymers	201
A1.1.1 Sugars and polysaccharides	201
A1.1.2 Amino acids and proteins	202
A1.1.3 Nucleic acids	204
A1.1.4 Fats and lipids	205
A1.2 Enzymes and catalysis	206
A1.2.1 Oxidation and reduction, respiration and photosynthesis	206
A1.2.2 Hydrolysis	208
A1.2.3 Polymerization	208
 Appendix 2: Abbreviations and Terminology	 211
A2.1 Abbreviations and jargon	211
A2.2 Numbers	213
A2.3 Units	214
 Appendix 3: Further Reading	 215
 Subject Index	 217
 Index of Names	 229