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# etymologia

## *Mycobacterium*

[mi'-ko-bak-tēr-eəm], from the Greek—myces (fungus) and baktērion (little rod)

The only genus of bacteria in the family *Mycobacteriaceae*. In 1882, German scientist Robert Koch reported the discovery of a bacillus from the lung tubercles that caused tuberculosis. Earlier, Norwegian researcher G.H.A. Hansen had identified a similar microbe which caused leprosy. In 1896, the genus name *Mycobacterium*, from the Middle Latin noun meaning fungus rodlet, was proposed to include these new pathogens, *M. tuberculosis* and *M. leprae*. The name does not mean that mycobacteria are fungi; rather, the tubercle bacilli grow on the surface of liquid media as moldlike pellicles when cultured. The nonmotile, acid-fast, aerobic organisms in this genus cause numerous human and animal diseases.

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