



Foodborne Infections and Intoxications: Chapter 30. Mycotoxins (Food Science and Technology)

John I. Pitt

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Mycotoxins are toxic metabolites produced by common fungi. The most important in the world's food and feed supplies are: aflatoxins, ochratoxin A, fumonisins, deoxynivalenol, and zearalenone. Aflatoxins, produced by *Aspergillus flavus* and related species in grains and nuts, cause liver cancer, often in association with hepatitis B virus, and some other effects. Ochratoxin A is produced by both *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* species in various foods including grains (in cold climates), coffee, dried grapes, and wines. It causes kidney damage and is also carcinogenic. Fumonisin is produced by *Fusarium verticillioides* and related species in maize. They cause brain liquefaction in horses, liver cancer in rats, and perhaps esophageal cancer in humans. Deoxynivalenol is the most commonly occurring of a large group of mycotoxins called trichothecenes, which are toxic because they interfere with protein synthesis. Deoxynivalenol and zearalenone, which is an estrogenic mycotoxin, are produced by *Fusarium graminearum* and related species in small grains, particularly wheat. This chapter provides an overview of the sources, occurrence, toxicity, and control of the major mycotoxins.

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