

A word that signifies the living of a microorganism upon or within an animal body—the human animal, of course—without producing disease, or any perceptible abnormality, but nevertheless possessing the possibility of altering the individual's immunological status by means of products of metabolism or of dissolution of dead bugs. To “infect” connotes pathogenicity, the production of abnormality. To “infest” might serve, to connote continued presence without disease, except for the fact that it has been arrogated (nasty word) in medical jargon for macro-sized parasites. To “associate” does not sound just right. As a matter of fact, nothing that comes to mind does.

—H. W. W.