

Basics of Medical Terminology

Your Body's Systems

Your body is made up of many systems, each having their own vital parts that work together. This list represents your bodily systems and the specific parts that comprise them:

- **Skeletal:** Bones, axial skeleton, appendicular skeleton, and joints
- **Muscular:** Muscles and tendons
- **Integumentary:** Skin, hair, nails, and glands in skin
- **Sensory:** Eyes, ears, nose, skin receptors, and mouth
- **Cardiovascular:** Heart, blood vessels, and blood
- **Lymphatic:** Tonsils, spleen, thymus, lymph nodes, lymphatic vessels, and lymph fluid
- **Respiratory:** Nose, pharynx, larynx, trachea, bronchi, and lungs
- **Gastrointestinal:** Mouth, esophagus, stomach, small and large intestines, pancreas, liver, and gallbladder
- **Endocrine:** Hormones, pituitary gland, thyroid, adrenal glands, pancreas, and gonads
- **Nervous:** Brain, spinal cord, ganglia, nerves, and sensory organs
- **Urinary:** Kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra
- **Reproductive:** Ovaries, uterine tubes, uterus, and vagina in females; testes, ducts, penis, urethra, and prostate in males

Common Medical Root Words

The root of a word is its main part and core meaning. These common medical root words give you a general idea of what you're dealing with or specify a body part.

The use of o joins words together

Cardi –o- myo – pathy: **Cardi** (heart) **o** (joining letter) **myo** (muscle) **pathy** ("suffering or disease")

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| • Abdomin/o: Abdomen | • Lapar/o: Abdomen, loin or flank |
| • Aden/o: Gland | • Lymph/o: Lymph vessels |
| • Anter/o: Front | • My/o: Muscle |
| • Arteri/o: Artery | • Neur/o: Nerve |
| • Audi/o: Hearing | • Ocul/o: Eye |
| • Bio: Life | • Ophthalm/o: Eyes |
| • Brachi/o: Arm | • Optic/o, opt/o: Seeing, sight |
| • Bronch/i, bronch/o: Bronchus | • Or/o: Mouth |
| • Carcin/o: Cancer | • Ot/o: Ear |
| • Cardi/o: Heart | • Path/o: Disease |
| • Col/o: Colon | • Pharmac/o: Drug |
| • Cyt/o: Cell | • Pulmon/o: Lungs |
| • Derm/a, dermat/o, dermat/o: Skin | • Sept/o: Infection |
| • Dors/i, dors/o: Back or posterior | • Thorac/o: Chest/thorax |
| • Encephal/o: Brain | • Thyr/o: Thyroid gland |
| • Gastr/o: Stomach | • Trachel/o: Neck or necklike |
| • Gynec/o: Female | • Trich/o: Hair or hairlike |
| • Hemat/o: Blood | • Ventr/i, ventr/o: Front of body |
| • Hist/o, histi/o: Tissue | • Viscer/o: Viscera (internal organs) |
| • Intestin/o: Intestine | |

Greek Tidbits in Medical Terms

Most common medical terms used today are derived from Latin or Greek. After all, the Greeks were the founders of modern medicine. Examples of medical terminology used today based on the Greek language are

- The word *semantics* is derived from the Greek *semantikos*, meaning “significant.”
- *Coccyx* comes from the Greek word for “cuckoo” -- it resembles a cuckoo’s beak.
- Remember: *myo* (muscle) is not to be confused with *myelo* (bone marrow).
- *Diaphoresis* comes from the Greek *dia* meaning “through” and *phoreo* meaning “I carry.” Translated, it means “the carrying through of perspiration.”
- Glaucoma: Greek *glaukos* means “blue-grey,” and *oma* means “a condition.” In *glaucoma*, gray color replaces the black pupil.
- Both Latin and Greek play a role in the roots of the word for heart, *cardium*. This word stems from the Greek word *kardia*.
- *Adenoid* comes from the Greek *aden*, meaning “gland,” and *cidos*, meaning “like.” The term was once used for the prostate gland.
- *Pancreas* is so named because of its fleshy appearance. Greek *pan* means “all,” and *krea* means “flesh.”
- *Endocrine*: Take *endo* and add it to the Greek *krinein*, which means “to separate.”
- *Paraplegia*: The Greek *para* means “beside,” and *plegia* means “paralysis.”
- The Greek word *pyelos* means “tub-shaped vessel,” which describes the shape of the kidney.
- *Venereal* is derived from Venus, the goddess of love. It was thought in ancient times to be one of the misfortunes of love.

From: dummies.com/medical terminology

Common Prefixes, meanings and examples

When written by themselves, prefixes are followed by a hyphen. Note that there can be more than one word for a meaning

a	without, away from	aphasia (without speech)
an-	without	anoxia (without oxygen)
ante-	before, in front of	ante partum (before birth)
anti-	against	antibiotic (against life)
auto-	self	autoimmune (body attacked by its own immune system)
brady-	slow	bradycardia (slow heartbeat)
dys-	painful, difficult	dyspnea (painful breathing)
endo-	within, inner	endoscopy (viewing within)
epi-	upon, over	epigastric (over the stomach)
hetero-	different	heterograft (graft from another person)
homo-	same	homozygous (two identical genes)
hydro-	water	hydrotherapy (water therapy)
hyper-	over, above	hypertrophy (overdevelopment)
hypo-	under, below	hypoglossal (under the tongue)
infra-	under, beneath	infraorbital (under or below the eye)
inter-	among, between	intervertebral (between the vertebrae)
intra-	within, inside	intravenous (inside, within a vein)
macro-	large	macrocephalic (large head)
micro-	small	microcephalic (small head)
neo-	new	neonate (newborn)
pan-	all	pancarditis (inflammation of all of the heart)
para-	beside, beyond, near	paranasal (near or alongside the nose)
per-	through	percutaneous (through the skin)
peri-	around	pericardian (around the heart)
post-	after	postpartum (after birth)
pre-	before	prefrontal (in front of the frontal bone)
pseudo-	false	pseudocyesis (false pregnancy)
retro-	backward, behind	retrograde (movement in a backward direction)
sub-	below, under	subcutaneous (under or below the skin)
super-	above, excess	supernumerary (above the normal numbers)
supra-	above	suprapubic (above the pubic bone)
tachy-	rapid, fast	tachycardia (fast heartbeat)
trans-	through, across	transurethral (across the urethra)
ultra-	beyond, excess	ultrasound (high-frequency sound waves)

Number Prefixes

bi-	two	bilateral (two sides)
di-	two	diplegic (paralysis of two extremities)
hemi-	half	hemiplegia (paralysis of one side/ or half the body)
mono-	one	monoplegia (paralysis of one extremity)
multi-	many	multigravida (woman pregnant more once)
nulli-	none	nulligravida (woman with no pregnancies)
poly-	many	polyuria (large amounts of urine)
quad-	four	quadriplegia (paralysis of all four extremities)
semi-	partial, half	semiconscious (partially conscious)
tri-	three	triceps (muscle with three heads)
uni-	one	unilateral (one side)