

UNIT 1

MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY



UNIT SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

What is Medical Terminology?

Terminology: the special words or phrases that are used in a particular profession.

Medical terminology is the language used by medical professionals. This language is the same for all medical professionals who speak English.

The Importance of Medical Terminology

Medical terminology:

- allows health professionals to communicate.
- can be understood by all healthcare professionals.
- describes the condition of a patient.
- identifies the treatment that a patient needs.
- saves time in a medical emergency.

Why it is useful to know medical terminology?

- It will help you to understand your doctor when they use medical terms.
- It will help you to understand your illness. It will allow you to know what condition is being described, or the treatment your doctor is recommending.
- It could help you to explain a medical emergency to the emergency services.
- It will be useful if you decide to study a healthcare-related degree at university.

MEDICAL ROOT WORDS, PREFIXES, SUFFIXES AND COMBINING VOWELS

Parts of Medical Words

Medical words are made of different parts. They can include the following:

- Prefix
- Root word
- Suffix
- Combining vowels

Recognising each different part of the medical word you are looking at will help you to understand how medical terms are structured (made up).

Hyperglycemia is a long word that is hard to say. But it can be broken down into three parts.

- The **prefix** in this word is **hyper**. A prefix goes at the start of a word.
- The **root** word is **glyc**. This is the basic part of the word.
- The **suffix** in this word is **aemia**. A suffix goes at the end of a word.

hyperglycaemia

hyper / glyc / aemia

The Meaning of Medical Terms

Root words, prefixes and suffixes all have different meanings in medical terminology. When they are put together, they describe the medical condition.

Let's look at the example word hyperglycaemia again.

- **Hyper** - means too high
- **glyc** - means sugar
- **aemia** - means blood

So, hyperglycaemia means high levels of sugar in the blood.

Putting the Word Parts Together

How the parts of a word are put together matters. It can change:

- The meaning of the word
- The spelling
- How to say each part of the word

Some medical words look and sound similar but have very different meanings. For example:

- **Dysphagia** - means difficulty swallowing.
- **Dysphasia** - means the loss of the power to speak or understand speech.

MEDICAL ROOT WORDS, PREFIXES, SUFFIXES AND COMBINING VOWELS

Root Words

A root word is the basic part of a word and it provides the meaning of the word. Medical terms always have at least one root word. By adding a prefix or a suffix to a root word, the meaning can be changed.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| • arthr | - (joint) | • pulmon | - (lungs) |
| • gastr | - (stomach) | • chem | - (chemical) |
| • phleb | - (vein) | • lipid | - (fat) |
| • carcin | - (cancer) | • thromb | - (clot) |
| • glyc | - (sugar) | • derm | - (skin) |
| • psych | - (mind) | • osteo | - (bones) |
| • cardi | - (heart) | • tox | - (poison) |
| • heam | - (blood) | | |

Medical Prefixes

'Pre' means before. Prefixes come before a root word. They give you more information about the root word.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| • a- or an- | - without or lack of | • epi- | - above |
| • ab- | - away from or off | • inter- | - between |
| • hyper- | - too high | • intra- | - within |
| • hypo- | - too low | • tachy- | - fast |
| • anti- | - against | • brady- | - slow |
| • ante- | - before | • myo- | - muscle |

Below are examples of how the prefixes are used in medical terminology.

Example	Word meaning
anaesthetic	without pain or sensation
abnormal	away from normal or not normal
antibacterial	to fight against bacteria
antenatal	before the birth of a baby
bradycardia	slow heartbeat
epidermis	upper layer of the skin
hypoglycaemia	too little sugar in the blood
hypotension	low blood pressure
intercellular	between the cells
intravenous	within the veins
tachycardia	fast heart rate

MEDICAL ROOT WORDS, PREFIXES, SUFFIXES AND COMBINING VOWELS

Medical Suffixes

A suffix can be added to the end of a root word. A suffix gives more information about a word. When it is used in medical terminology, a suffix normally refers to one of the following:

- A condition
- A procedure
- A disease

The suffix in a medical term is the part that helps to identify what is wrong with a patient, and how it can be fixed. Just like prefixes, **not all** medical terms contain a suffix. The pronunciation of suffixes is very important. Some suffixes can sound similar but have different meanings.

- **-aemia** - blood condition
- **-genic** - forming or causing
- **-ism** - condition or disease
- **-itis** - inflammation
- **-logy** - study of
- **-sis** - state of or condition
- **-pathy** - disease or disease process

Below are examples of how the suffixes are used in medical terminology.

- leuka**aemia** - cancer of the blood
- carcin**ogenic** - cancer forming
- hyperthyroid**ism** - a condition where the thyroid is overactive
- arthrit**is** - inflammation of the joints
- biol**ogy** - study of the body
- osteopor**osis** - condition of the bones
- neurop**athy** - a disease of the nervous system

If a word has a prefix and a suffix, you should identify what the **suffix** means first, then the prefix.

Combining Vowels

A **combining vowel** in medical terminology is a word part. It is usually an 'o' which makes it easier to say the medical term. Sometimes 'i' or 'u' can also be used as combining vowels in medical words.

The combining vowel is used to connect two root words and to connect a word root to a suffix.

MEDICAL ROOT WORDS, PREFIXES, SUFFIXES AND COMBINING VOWELS

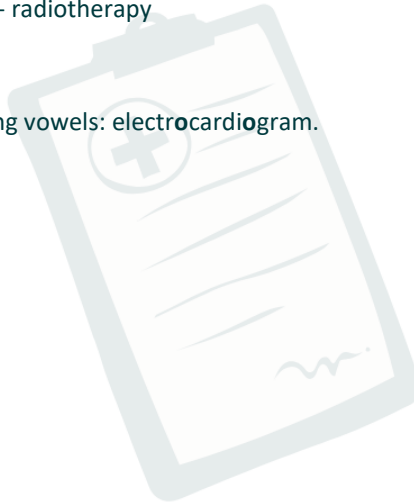
Some rules on combining vowels:

- A combining vowel does not change the meaning of the word.
- If a word contains two roots, then a combining vowel is used to connect them.
- A combining vowel is not always used when attaching a suffix to a root word.
- If a suffix already begins with a vowel, then a combining vowel is not needed.

Some **examples** of medical terms that use 'o' as the combining vowel:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • Acid- o -sis | - acidosis |
| • Haem- o -globin | - haemoglobin |
| • Carcin- o -genic | - carcinogenic |
| • Immune- o -therapy | - immunotherapy |
| • Gastr- o -enteritis | - gastroenteritis |
| • Radi- o -therapy | - radiotherapy |

Some words can have **two** combining vowels: electro**cardiogram**.



MEDICAL RECORD REPORTS

What are Medical Record Reports?

A medical record report is used by healthcare professionals. It keeps track of a patient's treatment and progress during the time that the patient is in their care.

If a patient visits a hospital with a medical complaint, there will be a medical record created of their time in the hospital, and any follow-up visits.

Information on a Medical Record Report

The report will include details such as:

1) Personal Information

The first part of a medical record report contains the patient's personal information, such as:

- Name
- Date of birth (DOB)
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Contact information

2) Medical History

The questions in this section can include:

Medical conditions:	Any medical conditions that the patient has, or any conditions they have had in the past. ⦿ This can help to diagnose and treat their current medical issue.
Medications:	Any medication that the patient takes. ⦿ This is important because some medications should not be taken with others.
Allergies:	Any allergies that the patient has. ⦿ The patient could be allergic to certain medications which could cause them harm.

3) Medical Complaint

The reason why the patient is visiting the hospital or surgery should be recorded here. Any signs and symptoms of their illness should be written in this section.

In medical terms,

- A **sign** is evidence of an illness that can be seen by others, such as a skin rash or a cough.
- A **symptom** is a feeling or physical change experienced by a patient, such as pain.

MEDICAL RECORD REPORTS

4) Physical Examination Results

The health professional will complete a physical examination of the patient. The examination will show if the patient has any abnormal signs.

A physical examination includes the following checks:

- **Height and weight**
- **Vital signs.** These checks are:
 - **Blood pressure:** the pressure of blood on the artery walls
 - **Pulse rate:** the number of times the heart beats each minute
 - **Respiration:** the rate of breathing
 - **Temperature:** how warm the body is
- **Examination of the body and body systems** including:
 - *head and neck.*
 - *chest, heart, and lungs.*
 - *skin and extremities (arms and legs).*
 - *the stomach.*
 - *the body's movement.*

5) Test Results and Diagnosis

Diagnosis the act of identifying a disease, illness, or problem by examining someone.

This part of the medical report will be used to record the results of the physical examination and the results of any other tests that the patient has had.

The doctor might complete different tests to confirm the presence of an illness or disease. These could include blood tests, X-rays, PCR tests or other diagnostic assessments.

6) Treatment Plan and Progress Report

After the disease or illness has been diagnosed, the healthcare professional will write a treatment plan on this part of the report. There may be a section to record the progress of the treatment.

Treatment plan	This section will record what treatment the patient will receive. This includes: ⊙ any medication they must take. ⊙ any surgery that they need to have. ⊙ recommended lifestyle changes.
Progress	When the patient visits the healthcare professional for follow-up appointments, their progress will be recorded to make sure that the treatment plan is working.

A detailed medical report will help the healthcare provider to provide the best and safest care for the patient. The information contained in a medical report is **confidential** (*secret/private*) and should only be shared between the patient and the healthcare provider.

RESPONDING TO MEDICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Medical Instructions

If you become a healthcare professional, you will need to respond to medical instructions daily. There are also other times when you might need to understand and respond to medical instructions, such as when talking to your doctor or during a first aid situation. Then you may be given directions from a medical professional over the phone.

Common medical terms

Knowing some common medical terms will help you in these, and other, medical situations.

- **Acute** - An illness that lasts for a short time, less than three months.
- **Chronic** - A disease or illness that lasts three months or more.
- **Cure** - Something (such as a drug or medical treatment) that stops disease and makes someone healthy again.
- **Diagnosis** - When a medical professional identifies the disease or illness that a patient has.
- **Infectious** - A disease that can be spread to other people by germs.
- **Prognosis** - A doctor's opinion about how someone will recover from an illness or injury.
- **Remission** - When the symptoms of the patient's disease get better (but are not cured).
- **Sign** - Evidence of an illness that can be seen by others, such as a skin rash or a cough.
- **Symptom** - A feeling or physical change experienced by a patient, such as pain.
- **Terminal** - Having an illness that cannot be cured.
- **Treatment** - Something that deals with a disease or injury to make someone feel better or become healthy again.

Visiting the Doctor

When you visit the doctor, you should prepare for the appointment. This includes being able to understand medical terms so that you can communicate with your doctor.

Before the appointment

Before you meet the doctor, think about:

- What is the reason for the visit? Make a list of the things that you want to talk to your doctor about so that you don't forget anything.

RESPONDING TO MEDICAL INSTRUCTIONS

During the appointment

When you see the doctor:

- Describe the signs and symptoms of the condition in as much detail as possible.
- Tell your doctor about your medical history.
- Your appointment will usually include a physical examination. Tell your doctor what parts of your body are affected by the medical complaint.
- If you don't understand anything that the doctor is saying about your condition, ask them to explain it.
- Make notes of any lifestyle changes that your doctor recommends.

After the appointment

When you leave the medical centre, review your visit. Ask yourself:

- Were your questions answered?
- Did you tell the doctor all of your signs and symptoms?
- Do you know what you should do now? (What medications should you take, or are there any more medical tests that you need?)
- If you have any questions, speak to the doctor again.

Medical Emergencies

Some things to remember in an emergency situation:

- Stay calm, you will be able to help more if you do not panic.
- Explain what is happening as clearly as possible. Include any signs and symptoms.
- Listen carefully to the instructions that the medical professionals give you. You might be instructed to give first aid.
- If you do not understand what you are being instructed to do, ask the medical professional to explain it more clearly.

You should only give first aid if you know what you are doing or if you are being instructed by a medical professional.

SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

Using Medical Terms Correctly

It is important that you can spell and pronounce the words correctly when communicating with a healthcare professional, this will make sure you are giving them the right information.

If you make a mistake in spelling or pronunciation of medical terminology, the medical professional might not understand you. This could lead to you receiving the incorrect treatment for your condition.

Spelling Medical Terms

Medical words can be difficult to spell. Some words are spelled similar to other words that have a completely different meaning.

- **Humerus:** The long bone in the arm that joins the shoulder to the elbow.
- **Humorous:** Something that is funny and causes laughter.

This example shows how important it is that words written in documents, such as medical records, are spelled correctly.

Pronouncing Medical Terms

Some medical words can also sound like other words but have completely different meanings. Syllables break a word into different parts.

Here are some examples of medical terms that have various different syllables:

Number of syllables			
1	Pain	Sad	Sick
2	Pain-ful	Feel-ing	Dis-ease
3	Pain-kill-er	E-mot-ion	In-fect-ion

Usually when a word has two or more syllables, importance is given to one of the syllables. It is said more clearly and stronger than the rest of the syllables in the word. This is called **word stress**.

It is important to know which syllable in each word should be stressed so that it can be clearly understood. Sometimes words are spelled the **same** but the **word stress** is different in each to show a different meaning.

The word **present** has two syllables. When stressing the first syllable, **pre-sent**, it means to be present. When stressing the second syllable, **pre-sent**, it means to show something to someone or a group of people.

UNIT 1

MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

UNIT SUMMARY

Resources

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