Medical Terminology Prefixes and Suffixes List

180 cards

Scan to add to the app

TERM	DEFINITION
Prefix	A word part at the start of a term that changes its meaning, often giving direction, number or degree. hyper- in hypertension.
Suffix	A word part at the end of a term that tells the condition, procedure, instrument or specialty. -itis in arthritis.
Word root	The core of a term, usually from Greek or Latin, that names the body part or the subject. cardi in cardiology, hepat in hepatitis.
Combining vowel	A vowel, usually o, that links a root to a suffix starting with a consonant. It is usually dropped before a suffix starting with a vowel. arthr/o + -pathy = arthropathy, but arthr/o + -itis = arthritis.
a-, an-	Without, lacking, not. apnea: absence of breathing.
anti-	Against. anticoagulant: a substance that works against blood clotting.
contra-	Against, opposite. contraindicated: a treatment advised against in a given case.
auto-	Self. autoimmune: the immune system attacks the body's own tissue.

TERM	DEFINITION
dys-	Difficult, painful, abnormal. dyspnea: difficult breathing. Dysuria: painful urination.
eu-	Good, well, normal. eupnea: normal, easy breathing.
mal-	Bad, poor. malnutrition: poor nutrition.
neo-	New. neonate: a newborn. Neoplasm: a new growth.
pan-	All, entire. pancytopenia: deficiency of all types of blood cells.
pseudo-	False. pseudocyesis: a false pregnancy.
bio-	Life, living. biology: the study of life.
ab-	Away from. abduction: movement of a limb away from the midline.
ad-	Toward, near. adduction: movement of a limb toward the midline.
ante-	Before, in front of. antenatal: before birth.
pre-	Before, in time or position; also pro-. preoperative: before surgery.
post-	After, behind. postoperative: after surgery.

TERM	DEFINITION
circum-	Around. circumoral: around the mouth.
peri-	Around, surrounding (a structure). pericardial: around the heart.
dia-	Through, across. diarrhea: a flowing through of loose stool.
trans-	Across, through. transdermal: across the skin, as in a medicated patch.
endo-	Within, inner. endocardium: the inner lining of the heart.
intra-	Within, inside. intravenous: within a vein.
inter-	Between. intercostal: between the ribs.
epi-	Upon, over. epidermis: the outer layer of skin, lying upon the dermis.
sub-	Under, below. subcutaneous: under the skin.
hypo-	Below normal, deficient. hypotension: low blood pressure.
hyper-	Above normal, excessive. hypertension: high blood pressure.
supra-	Above. suprapubic: above the pubic bone.

TERM	DEFINITION
infra-	Below. infraorbital: below the eye socket.
retro-	Behind, backward. retroperitoneal: behind the peritoneum.
exo-, ecto-	Outside, outer. exocrine gland: releases its secretion outward through a duct.
extra-	Outside, beyond. extracellular: outside the cell.
meso-	Middle. mesoderm: the middle layer of the embryo.
para-	Beside, beyond; also abnormal. parathyroid: glands beside the thyroid.
meta-	Beyond, changing. metastasis: spread of disease from its original site to another.
syn-, sym-	Together, with. syndrome: signs and symptoms that occur together.
brady-	Slow. bradycardia: slow heart rate.
tachy-	Rapid, fast. tachycardia: rapid heart rate.
hemi-	Half. hemisphere: one half of the brain.
semi-	Half, partial. semiconscious: partly conscious.

TERM	DEFINITION
mono-, uni-	One. monocyte: a white blood cell with a single nucleus. Unilateral: one side.
bi-	Two, double. bilateral: both sides.
tri-	Three. triceps: a muscle with three heads.
quadri-	Four. quadriceps: a muscle with four heads.
poly-	Many, much. polyuria: excessive urine output.
oligo-	Few, a small amount. oliguria: scanty urine output.
macro-	Large. macrocephaly: an abnormally large head.
micro-	Small. microcephaly: an abnormally small head.
iso-	Same, equal. isotonic: having the same concentration as body fluids.
homo-	Same, alike. homogeneous: made of the same kind throughout.
hetero-	Different, other. heterogeneous: made of different kinds.
ortho-	Straight, normal, correct. orthodontist: a specialist in straightening teeth.

TERM	DEFINITION
cardi/o	Heart. cardiology: study of the heart.
gastr/o	Stomach. gastritis: inflammation of the stomach.
hepat/o	Liver. hepatic: relating to the liver.
nephr/o	Kidney. nephrologist: a specialist in kidney disorders.
neur/o	Nerve. neurology: study of the nervous system.
encephal/o	Brain. encephalitis: inflammation of the brain.
cerebr/o	Cerebrum, the largest part of the brain. cerebral: relating to the cerebrum.
pneum/o	Lung, air. pneumonia: a disease state of the lung, often an infection.
pulmon/o	Lung. pulmonologist: a specialist in lung disorders.
enter/o	Intestine. gastroenteritis: inflammation of the stomach and intestines.
ren/o	Kidney, as nephr/o does. renal: relating to the kidney.
oste/o	Bone. osteoporosis: a disease that weakens bone.

TERM	DEFINITION
arthr/o	Joint. arthropathy: disease of a joint.
derm/o, dermat/o	Skin. dermatologist: a specialist in skin disorders.
hem/o, hemat/o	Blood. hematology: study of the blood.
cyt/o	Cell. cytology: study of cells.
my/o	Muscle. myocardium: the heart muscle.
ot/o	Ear. otitis: inflammation of the ear.
rhin/o	Nose. rhinitis: inflammation of the lining of the nose.
ophthalm/o	Eye. ophthalmology: study of the eye.
thorac/o	Chest. thoracic: relating to the chest.
cephal/o	Head. cephalic: relating to the head.
hyster/o	Uterus. hysteropexy: surgical fixation of the uterus.
mast/o	Breast. mastitis: inflammation of the breast.

TERM	DEFINITION
cyst/o	Bladder or sac. cystitis: inflammation of the bladder.
laryng/o	Larynx, the voice box. laryngitis: inflammation of the larynx.
trache/o	Trachea, the windpipe. tracheitis: inflammation of the trachea.
lip/o	Fat. liposuction: removal of fat by suction.
onc/o	Tumor, mass. oncology: study of tumors.
path/o	Disease. pathology: study of disease.
angi/o	Vessel, usually a blood vessel. angioplasty: surgical repair of a vessel.
ven/o	Vein. venous: relating to a vein.
phleb/o	Vein, as ven/o does. phlebotomist: a person who draws blood from a vein.
erythr/o	Red. erythrocyte: a red blood cell.
leuk/o	White. leukocyte: a white blood cell.
cyan/o	Blue. cyanosis: a bluish color of the lips and nail beds, from low oxygen.

TERM	DEFINITION
melan/o	Black, dark. melanocyte: a cell that makes melanin, the dark pigment of skin and hair.
glyc/o	Sugar, glucose. glycemia: the sugar level in the blood.
-itis	Inflammation. arthritis: inflammation of a joint.
-ectomy	Surgical removal, cutting out. mastectomy: removal of a breast.
-otomy, -tomy	Cutting into, an incision. laparotomy: an incision into the abdomen. The suffix names the cut, not a removal.
-ostomy, -stomy	A surgically created opening. colostomy: an opening of the colon through the abdominal wall.
-plasty	Surgical repair or reconstruction. rhinoplasty: surgical reconstruction of the nose.
-pexy	Surgical fixation, fastening in place. oophoropexy: surgical fixation of an ovary.
-rrhaphy	Suturing, stitching in place. herniorrhaphy: surgical repair of a hernia with sutures.
-centesis	Surgical puncture to draw off fluid. thoracentesis: puncture of the chest to remove fluid.
-desis	Surgical binding, fusing together. pleurodesis: binding the layers of the pleura together.

TERM	DEFINITION
-tripsy	Crushing. lithotripsy: crushing of a stone.
-lith, -lithiasis	Stone, calculus; -lithiasis is the condition of having stones. nephrolithiasis: stones in the kidney.
-therapy	Treatment. chemotherapy: treatment with drugs.
-scopy	The process of visual examination with a scope. colonoscopy: visual examination of the colon.
-scope	Instrument for visual examination. endoscope: an instrument for looking inside the body.
-gram	The record or image that is produced. electrocardiogram: a record of the heart's electrical activity.
-graph	Instrument used to make a record. electrocardiograph: the machine that records it.
-graphy	The process of recording or imaging. mammography: imaging of the breast.
-meter	Instrument for measuring. thermometer: measures temperature.
-metry	The process of measuring. thermometry: the measurement of temperature.
-opsy	Viewing, examination. biopsy: examination of living tissue taken from the body.
-algia, -dynia	Pain. neuralgia: pain along a nerve.

TERM	DEFINITION
-emia	A blood condition, a substance in the blood. septicemia: infection with germs or their toxins in the blood.
-penia	Lack of, deficiency. thrombocytopenia: deficiency of platelets.
-megaly	Enlargement. hepatomegaly: an enlarged liver.
-oma	Tumor, mass. lipoma: a tumor of fat tissue. Not every -oma is cancer.
-ia	A condition, often a diseased or abnormal state. hemophilia: a bleeding condition.
-osis	An abnormal condition, usually. cyanosis: a bluish color of the skin.
-pathy	Disease, abnormality. neuropathy: disease of the nerves.
-rrhea	Flow, discharge. otorrhea: discharge from the ear.
-rrhage, -rrhagia	Excessive flow, bursting forth. hemorrhage: heavy bleeding.
-lysis	Breakdown, destruction, dissolving. hemolysis: breakdown of red blood cells.
-malacia	Softening. chondromalacia: softening of cartilage.
-sclerosis	Hardening. arteriosclerosis: hardening of the arteries.

TERM	DEFINITION
-stenosis	Narrowing, constriction. ureterostenosis: narrowing of a ureter.
-stasis	Stopping, keeping constant. hemostasis: stopping of bleeding. Homeostasis: keeping conditions steady.
-ectasis	Expansion, dilation. bronchiectasis: abnormal widening of the airways.
-plegia	Paralysis. hemiplegia: paralysis of one side of the body.
-spasm	Sudden, involuntary contraction. laryngospasm: involuntary contraction of the muscles of the larynx.
-ptosis	Drooping, sagging. blepharoptosis: drooping of the upper eyelid.
-phagia	Eating, swallowing. dysphagia: difficulty swallowing.
-esthesia	Sensation, feeling. anesthesia: loss of sensation.
-phasia	Speech. aphasia: loss or impairment of speech.
-pnea	Breathing. tachypnea: rapid breathing.
-opia	A vision condition. myopia: nearsightedness.
-poiesis	Formation, production. hematopoiesis: production of blood cells.

TERM	DEFINITION
-trophy	Growth or development of size. hypertrophy: enlargement of an organ by an increase in cell size.
-plasia	Formation, development of cells. hyperplasia: an increase in the number of cells.
-uria	A condition of the urine. pyuria: pus in the urine.
-cele	Bulge, protrusion. cystocele: protrusion of the bladder.
-logy	Study of. pathology: the study of disease.
-logist	A specialist who studies and treats. urologist: a specialist in the urinary tract.
-iatry	Medical specialty, treatment. psychiatry: the medical specialty of the mind and mental disorders.
-cyte	Cell. thrombocyte: a platelet, a clotting cell.
-blast	Immature cell, bud, germ. osteoblast: a cell that builds bone.
-gen	A substance or agent that produces. pathogen: an agent that causes disease.
-genic	Producing, or produced by. carcinogenic: capable of producing cancer.
-cide, -cidal	Killing, destroying. bactericide: an agent that kills bacteria.

TERM	DEFINITION
-phobia	Intense fear. arachnophobia: fear of spiders.
-oid	Resembling, like. arachnoid: resembling a spider web.
-ac, -al, -ic, -ous	Relating to, pertaining to. cardiac: relating to the heart.
Decompose: gastralgia	gastr(o)- (stomach) + -algia (pain). Pain in the stomach.
Decompose: cardiomegaly	cardi(o)- (heart) + -megaly (enlargement). Enlargement of the heart.
Decompose: nephropathy	nephr(o)- (kidney) + -pathy (disease). Disease of the kidney.
Decompose: leukopenia	leuk(o)- (white) + -penia (deficiency). A deficiency of white blood cells.
Decompose: hematuria	hemat(o)- (blood) + -uria (condition of the urine). Blood in the urine.
Decompose: cystoscopy	cyst(o)- (bladder) + -scopy (visual examination). Visual examination of the inside of the bladder.
Decompose: arthrocentesis	arthr(o)- (joint) + -centesis (puncture to draw off fluid). Puncture of a joint to remove fluid.
Decompose: tachycardia	tachy- (rapid) + cardi(o)- (heart) + -ia (condition). A rapid heart rate.
Decompose: pericarditis	peri- (around) + card(i)- (heart) + -itis (inflammation). Inflammation of the tissue around the heart.

TERM	DEFINITION
Decompose: intravenous	intra- (within) + ven(o)- (vein) + -ous (relating to). Within a vein.
Decompose: quadriplegia	quadri- (four) + -plegia (paralysis). Paralysis of all four limbs.
Decompose: subhepatic	sub- (below) + hepat(o)- (liver) + -ic (relating to). Below the liver.
Decompose: myoma	my(o)- (muscle) + -oma (tumor). A tumor of muscle tissue.
Decompose: rhinorrhea	rhin(o)- (nose) + -rrhea (flow, discharge). Discharge from the nose.
Decompose: ophthalmoscope	ophthalm(o)- (eye) + -scope (instrument for visual examination). An instrument for examining the eye.
Decompose: bradypnea	brady- (slow) + -pnea (breathing). Slow breathing.
Inflammation of the kidney: which term?	Nephritis. nephr(o)- (kidney) + -itis (inflammation).
Surgical removal of the stomach: which term?	Gastrectomy. gastr(o)- (stomach) + -ectomy (surgical removal).
Surgical repair of a blood vessel: which term?	Angioplasty. angi(o)- (vessel) + -plasty (surgical repair).
Abnormally low sugar level in the blood: which term?	Hypoglycemia. hypo- (below normal) + glyc(o)- (sugar) + -emia (blood condition).
Instrument for looking into the ear: which term?	Otoscope. ot(o)- (ear) + -scope (instrument for visual examination).

TERM	DEFINITION
Study of the skin: which term?	Dermatology. derm(at)(o)- (skin) + -logy (study of).
Physician who specializes in diagnosing and treating disorders of the nervous system (non-surgical): which term?	Neurologist. neur(o)- (nerve) + -logist (specialist who studies and treats).
A surgeon removes the uterus: hyster/o + which suffix?	-ectomy, giving hysterectomy. The uterus is cut out, not just opened.
A surgeon makes an incision into the chest: thorac/o + which suffix?	-otomy, giving thoracotomy. The term names the incision into the chest; it is not a removal (-ectomy) or a created opening (-ostomy).
A surgeon creates an opening from the trachea to the outside of the neck: trache/o + which suffix?	-ostomy, giving tracheostomy. The patient breathes through the opening, for a time or for good.