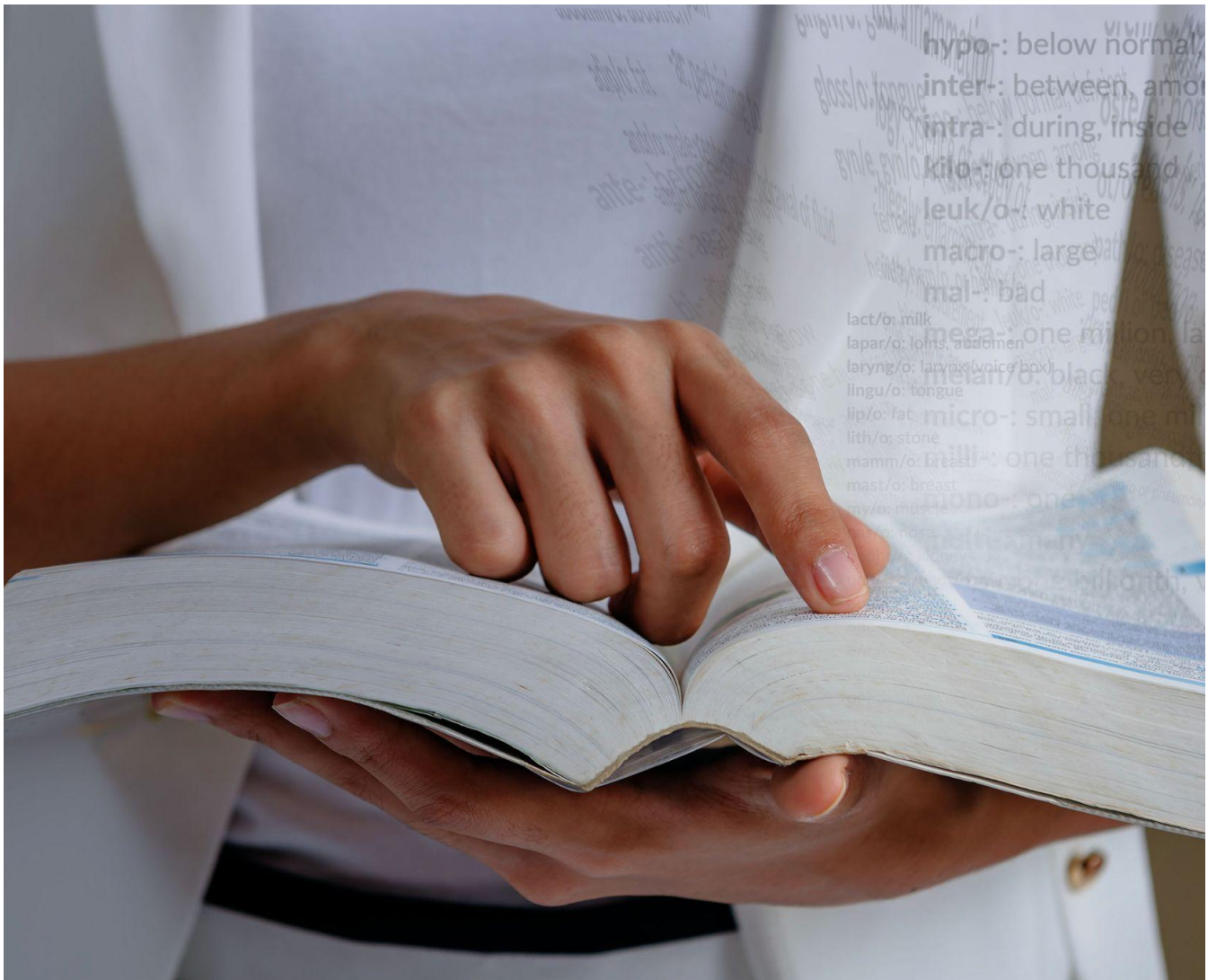


Elements of Medical Terminology

Quick Reference Guide



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Elements of Medical Terms

Basic elements

- combining form = word root followed by vowel to aid pronunciation (see Note)
- prefix = element placed before the combining form to provide additional meaning
- suffix = element placed after the combining form to provide additional meaning

Common structures of medical terms

- prefix + combining form
- combining form + suffix
- prefix + combining form + suffix

Note: Delete vowel at end of combining form if suffix starting with vowel follows.

For some common prefixes, combining forms, and suffixes, please see page 2.

Other Aspects of Medical Terminology

Abbreviations

- **Definitions**
 - **abbreviation:** shortened form of word or phrase, used in place of the whole
 - **initialism:** abbreviation consisting of first letter(s) of each word in a phrase
 - **acronym:** initialism pronounced as a word (also sometimes used as synonym for *initialism*)
- **Advice**
 - In general, abbreviate items only if they will appear at least several times.
 - Use only established abbreviations unless strong reason exists to do otherwise.
 - On first use, write out the full word or phrase; then place the abbreviation in parentheses.

Eponyms and Toponyms

- **Definitions**
 - **eponym:** term containing the name of a person (example: Down syndrome)
 - **toponym:** term containing the name of a place (example: Lyme disease)
- **Advice**
 - Capitalize only the part of the term consisting of the name of the person or place.
 - In medical dictionaries, look under the general part of the term (example: *syndrome*, not *Down*).

Nomenclature

- **Definition**
 - **nomenclature:** standardized system of names (for example, in genetics, hematology, or oncology)
- **Advice**
 - For guidance, see style manuals such as the *AMA Manual of Style* and *Scientific Style and Format*.
 - Take care regarding details such as capitalization, italics, and numeral format (arabic or roman).

Some Common Prefixes, Combining Forms, and Suffixes

Prefixes

ante-: before
anti-: against
bi-: two
brady-: slow
centi-: one hundredth
circum-: around
cyan/o-: blue
dys-: bad, difficult
ecto-: outside
endo-: inside
erythr/o-: red
eu-: good, well
extra-: outside
hemi-: half
hyper-: above normal, excessive

hypo-: below normal, deficient
inter-: between, among
intra-: during, inside
kilo-: one thousand
leuk/o-: white
macro-: large
mal-: bad
mega-: one million, large
melan/o-: black, very dark
micro-: small, one millionth
milli-: one thousandth
mono-: one
multi-: many
nano-: one billionth, very small
neo-: new

oligo-: a few, a little, too few, too little
peri-: around
poly-: many, too much
post-: after, behind
pre-: before, in front of
presby-: old
pseudo-: false
sub-: beneath, under
supra-: above
tachy-: fast
trans-: across, through
tri-: three
uni-: one
xanth/o-: yellow

Combining Forms

abdomin/o: abdomen
adip/o: fat
andr/o: male
angi/o: (blood or lymph) vessel
arteri/o: artery
arthr/o: joint
brachi/o: arm
bucc/o: cheek
carcin/o: cancer
cardi/o: heart
cephal/o: head
cervic/o: neck (of body or of body part)
chol/e or **chol/o**: bile
cholecyst/o: gallbladder
chondr/o: cartilage
col/o or **colon/o**: colon
crani/o: skull
cyst/i or **cyst/o**: bladder, cyst
cyt/o: cell
dent/i or **dent/o**: tooth or teeth
derm/o or **dermat/o**: skin
encephalo/o: brain
enter/o: intestine
galact/o: milk
gastr/o: stomach
ger/o: old age, the elderly
gingiv/o: gums

gloss/o: tongue
gyn/e, **gyn/o**, or **gynec/o**: female
hem/a, **hem/o**, or **hemat/o**: blood
hepat/o: liver
hist/o: tissue
hyster/o: uterus
iatr/o: relating to physicians or medical treatment
lact/o: milk
lapar/o: loins, abdomen
laryng/o: larynx (voice box)
lingu/o: tongue
lip/o: fat
lith/o: stone
mamm/o: breast
mast/o: breast
my/o: muscle
nas/o: nose
nephro/o: kidney
neur/i or **neur/o**: nerve
ocul/o: eye
odont/o: tooth or teeth
onc/o: tumor
oophor/o: ovary
ophthalm/o: eye
opt/o: eye
orchi/o: testis
oste/o: bone

ot/o: ear
path/o: disease
ped/i or **ped/o**: child or children, foot or feet
pharmac/o: drugs
pharyng/o: throat
phleb/o: vein
pneumo/o or **pneumon/o**: lungs, air
pod/o: foot
proct/o: rectum
psych/o: mind
pulmon/o: lungs
py/o: pus
pyr/o: fire, heat, fever
radi/o: radiation
ren/o or **ren/i**: kidney
rhin/o: nose
salping/o: oviduct (fallopian tube)
sangu/i or **sanguin/o**: blood
somn/i or **somn/o**: sleep
spir/o: breathing
stom or **stomat/o**: mouth
thorac/o: chest
thromb/o: clot
ven/i or **ven/o**: vein

Suffixes

-**ac**: pertaining to
-**al**: pertaining to
-**algia**: pain
-**ar**: pertaining to
-**centesis**: withdrawal of fluid
-**cide**: killing
-**cyte**: cell
-**dynia**: pain
-**ectomy**: excision
-**emesis**: vomiting
-**emia**: blood condition
-**gen**: cause
-**genesis**: development, origin
-**gram**: recording
-**graphy**: production of a recording

-**iatry**: medical treatment
-**ic**: pertaining to
-**itis**: inflammation
-**logy**: science of, study of
-**megaly**: enlargement
-**metry**: measurement
-**oma**: swelling, tumor
-**opia**: vision
-**opsy**: viewing
-**osis**: condition
-**pathy**: disease
-**penia**: deficiency
-**pepsia**: digestion
-**phagia**: eating
-**phasia**: speech
-**phobia**: fear

-**phoria**: feeling
-**plegia**: paralysis
-**pnea**: breathing
-**poiesis**: formation, production
-**prandial**: relating to a meal
-**rrhea**: discharge, excessive flow
-**sclerosis**: hardening
-**scopy**: viewing with aid of instrument
-**stomy**: opening, creation of opening
-**therapy**: treatment
-**thermia**: heat, temperature
-**tomy**: cutting into
-**uria**: urine, urination



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