

PREFIX	Meaning	Example
A- An-	Not, without	Afebrile
Cyano-	Blue	Cyanosis
Brady-	Slow	Bradycardia
Dys-	Abnormal	Dyspnea
Exo-	Outside of	Exoskeleton
Hyper-	Excessive	Hypertension
Hypo-	Low	Hypotension
Intra-	Within	Intramuscular
Leuko-	White	Leukocytes
Peri-	Around	Pericardium
Onco-	Tumor	Oncology
Retro-	Behind	Retrosternum
Tachy-	Fast	Tachycardia
ROOT	Meaning	Example
Aden	gland	Adenoma
Angi	blood vessel	Angioplasty
Arthr	joint	Arthritis
Broncho	Airway (lung)	Bronchitis
Cyst	bladder	Cystitis
Enceph	Brain	Encephalopathy
Gastr	stomach	Gastritis
Hem	Blood	Hematuria
Hepat	liver	Hepatitis
Nephro	Kidney	Nephrolithiasis
Phleb	Vein	Phlebitis
Pneumo	Lung	Pneumonitis
SUFFIX	Meaning	Example
-algia	Painful condition	Arthralgia
-asthenia	Weakness	Myasthenia
-cyte	Cell	Leukocyte
-ectomy	Excision	Colectomy
-emesis	Vomiting	Hematemesis
-itis	inflammation	Colitis
-oma	Tumor	Hepatoma
-otomy	Incision/cut into	Gastrotomy
-pathy	Disease	Cardiomyopathy
-penia	Shortage of	Leukopenia
-plasty	Repair	Angioplasty
-rhea	Discharge	Rhinorhea



If you need more help, make an appointment with us at...

Student Academic Learning Services

Phone: 905.721.2000 ext. 2491

Email: sals@durhamcollege.ca

or

visit our front desk in room 204,
Student Services Building (SSB)

Student Academic Learning Services

Understanding Medical Terminology

Understanding Medical Terminology

TIP #1

Most medical terms contain two or more parts:

Root(s) - the word's essential meaning; a medical word may have two roots

Prefix - added to the beginning of a root word to make it more specific

Suffix - added to the end of the root word to make it more specific

Linking or combining vowels (a,e,i,o,u) placed in between word parts to help with pronunciation

Examples:

Myocarditis - myo/card/itis

Meaning: Inflammation of the heart muscle
myo (root) = muscle, **card** (root) = heart, and **-itis** (suffix) = inflammation.

Percutaneous - per/cutan/eous

Meaning: something through the skin
per- (prefix) = through, **cutan** (root) = skin, and **-eous** (suffix) = pertaining to, relating to.

Suprascapular - supra/scapular

Meaning: relative to the area above the shoulder blade

supra- (prefix) = above, **scapula** (root) = shoulder blade, and **-r** (suffix) = relative to.

To understand a medical term, break it down into its component parts - root(s), prefix, suffix, and combining vowels.

TIP #2

The definitions of root words, prefixes and suffixes remain the same when they are combined to produce different terms.

Examples:

1. The root word for skin is **derm**. Its forms are **derma, dermat, dermat, and dermo**.

Dermatitis - condition of inflamed skin **Dermat** (root) = skin and **-itis** (suffix) = inflammation

Dermatology - The study of diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases

Dermat (root) and **-ology** (suffix) = the study of

2. The root word for heart is **card**.

Cardiovascular - pertaining to the heart and vessels

Cardiocentesis - surgical puncture of the heart

Cardiology - the study of the heart and its functions

3. The root for blood is **hem**.

Hemorrhage - bleeding from tissue
-rrhage (suffix) = excessive flow

Hemostasis - the process by which bleeding is stopped
-stasis (suffix) = an arrest (stop) in a process

Remember that the basic definition of a word part remains the same when combined with various components.

TIP # 3

Also, prefixes and suffixes are defined the same when combined with various roots. They are never used alone.

Here are some common **prefixes** at the beginning of medical terminology:

Auto- = self; for example, **autoimmune** or **autogenous**

Anti- = against; **antiseptis** or **antibodies**

De- = reverse, remove; **dehydrate** or **defibrillate**

Dys- = abnormal, difficult; **dyspnea** or **dysuria**

Contra- = opposed; **contraception** or **contraindication**

Hyper- = above, excessive; **hypertensive** or **hyperglycemia**

Suffixes attach to the end of roots and describe certain actions, such as these surgical suffixes:

-ectomy = surgical removal; **thyroidectomy**

-plasty = surgical repair; **angioplasty**

-stomy = creation of new opening; **colonostomy**

And these **suffixes** for procedures or equipment

-graph = recording instrument;
electrocardiograph

-scope = instrument to examine visually;
endoscope

-therapy = course of treatment; **chemotherapy**

See the back page for more common medical prefixes, roots, and suffixes!