

Master Medical Terminology Glossary

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This comprehensive A–Z glossary covers the most important medical terms encountered in introductory and intermediate medical terminology courses. Phonetic pronunciation is provided for each term.

Term	Pronunciation	Definition
Abscess	<i>AB-ses</i>	Localized collection of pus in a cavity formed by tissue destruction
Acromegaly	<i>ak-roh-MEG-ah-lee</i>	Disorder of excessive growth hormone production (pituitary)
Acute	<i>ah-KYOOT</i>	Of rapid onset, short duration, and often severe
Adenoma	<i>ad-eh-NOH-mah</i>	Benign tumor arising from glandular tissue
Adhesion	<i>ad-HEE-zhun</i>	Fibrous band of scar tissue binding body structures together
Adrenal	<i>ah-DREE-nal</i>	Pertaining to the adrenal (suprarenal) glands above the kidneys
Alopecia	<i>al-oh-PEE-shee-ah</i>	Baldness; hair loss from the scalp or body
Amenorrhea	<i>ah-men-oh-REE-ah</i>	Absence of menstruation for 3+ months in a non-pregnant woman
Amnesia	<i>am-NEE-zhah</i>	Loss of memory, usually resulting from brain injury or disease
Anaphylaxis	<i>an-ah-fih-LAK-sis</i>	Severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction
Anemia	<i>ah-NEE-mee-ah</i>	Deficiency of red blood cells or hemoglobin
Aneurysm	<i>AN-yoo-rizm</i>	Abnormal ballooning or dilation of an arterial wall
Angina	<i>an-JY-nah</i>	Chest pain from insufficient coronary blood supply
Angioplasty	<i>AN-jee-oh-plas-tee</i>	Surgical repair or reconstruction of a blood vessel
Anorexia	<i>an-oh-REK-see-ah</i>	Loss of appetite; also anorexia nervosa (eating disorder)
Aphasia	<i>ah-FAY-zhah</i>	Loss or impairment of the ability to communicate through language
Appendectomy	<i>ap-en-DEK-toh-mee</i>	Surgical removal of the appendix
Arrhythmia	<i>ah-RITH-mee-ah</i>	Irregular or abnormal heart rhythm
Arteriosclerosis	<i>ar-teer-ee-oh-skleh-R OH-sis</i>	Hardening of the artery walls
Arthralgia	<i>ar-THRAL-jee-ah</i>	Joint pain without inflammation
Arthritis	<i>ar-THRY-tis</i>	Inflammation of one or more joints
Ascites	<i>ah-SY-teez</i>	Abnormal accumulation of fluid in the peritoneal (abdominal) cavity
Asthma	<i>AZ-mah</i>	Chronic inflammatory disease of the airways; bronchospasm
Ataxia	<i>ah-TAK-see-ah</i>	Lack of muscular coordination
Atherosclerosis	<i>ath-er-oh-skleh-ROH-s is</i>	Plaque buildup inside artery walls causing narrowing
Atrophy	<i>AT-roh-fee</i>	Wasting or decrease in the size of an organ or tissue
Auscultation	<i>aw-skul-TAY-shun</i>	Listening to body sounds, usually with a stethoscope
Benign	<i>beh-NINE</i>	Non-cancerous; not life-threatening
Biopsy	<i>BY-op-see</i>	Removal of tissue for microscopic examination
Bradycardia	<i>brad-ee-KAR-dee-ah</i>	Heart rate below 60 beats per minute

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Bronchitis	<i>bron-KY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the bronchial tubes
Bronchospasm	<i>BRON-koh-spazm</i>	Sudden contraction of bronchial smooth muscle; causes wheezing
Carcinoma	<i>kar-sih-NOH-mah</i>	Malignant tumor arising from epithelial cells
Cardiomegaly	<i>kar-dee-oh-MEG-ah-le e</i>	Enlargement of the heart
Cardiomyopathy	<i>kar-dee-oh-my-OP-ah-thee</i>	Disease of the heart muscle
Cellulitis	<i>sel-yoo-LY-tis</i>	Bacterial infection of skin and subcutaneous tissue
Cerebrovascular	<i>seh-ree-broh-VAS-kyo o-lar</i>	Pertaining to blood vessels of the brain
Cholecystitis	<i>koh-lee-sis-TY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the gallbladder
Cholecystectomy	<i>koh-lee-sis-TEK-toh-m ee</i>	Surgical removal of the gallbladder
Cholelithiasis	<i>koh-lee-lih-THY-ah-sis</i>	Presence of gallstones in the gallbladder
Chronic	<i>KRON-ik</i>	Persisting for a long time; opposite of acute
Cirrhosis	<i>sih-ROH-sis</i>	End-stage liver disease with fibrosis and nodular regeneration
Colitis	<i>koh-LY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the colon
Colonoscopy	<i>koh-lon-OS-koh-pee</i>	Visual examination of the entire colon with a scope
Congenital	<i>kon-JEN-ih-tal</i>	Present at birth; may or may not be genetic
Contusion	<i>kon-TOO-zhun</i>	Bruise; injury without breaking the skin
COPD	—	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema + chronic bronchitis)
Crepitus	<i>KREP-ih-tus</i>	Grating or crackling sound/sensation in joints or under skin
Cyanosis	<i>sy-ah-NOH-sis</i>	Bluish discoloration of skin/mucous membranes from low O ₂
Cystitis	<i>sis-TY-tis</i>	Inflammation (usually infection) of the urinary bladder
Cystoscopy	<i>sis-TOS-koh-pee</i>	Visual examination of the bladder interior
Deep vein thrombosis	<i>throm-BOH-sis</i>	Blood clot in a deep vein, typically in the leg
Dementia	<i>deh-MEN-shee-ah</i>	Progressive decline in cognitive function
Dermatitis	<i>der-mah-TY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the skin
Diabetes mellitus	<i>dy-ah-BEE-teez MEL-ih-tus</i>	Metabolic disorder of insulin/glucose regulation
Dialysis	<i>dy-AL-ih-sis</i>	Process of filtering waste from blood (replaces kidney function)
Diaphoresis	<i>dy-ah-foh-REE-sis</i>	Excessive perspiration/sweating
Diarrhea	<i>dy-ah-REE-ah</i>	Frequent loose or watery stools
Diverticulitis	<i>dy-ver-tik-yoo-LY-tis</i>	Inflammation of small pouches (diverticula) in the colon
Dysphagia	<i>dis-FAY-jee-ah</i>	Difficulty swallowing

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Dysphasia	<i>dis-FAY-zhah</i>	Impaired ability to speak or understand language (partial aphasia)
Dyspnea	<i>DISP-nee-ah</i>	Difficulty breathing; shortness of breath
Dysuria	<i>dis-YOO-ree-ah</i>	Painful or difficult urination
Ecchymosis	<i>ek-ih-MOH-sis</i>	Bruising; discoloration from blood under the skin
Eczema	<i>EK-zeh-mah</i>	Chronic inflammatory skin condition; atopic dermatitis
Edema	<i>eh-DEE-mah</i>	Excess fluid in tissues causing swelling
Embolism	<i>EM-boh-lizm</i>	Blockage of a vessel by a clot or foreign material
Emphysema	<i>em-fih-SEE-mah</i>	Destruction of alveolar walls; trapped air in lungs
Encephalitis	<i>en-sef-ah-LY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the brain
Endometriosis	<i>en-doh-mee-tree-OH-sis</i>	Uterine lining tissue grows outside the uterus
Epistaxis	<i>ep-ih-STAK-sis</i>	Nosebleed
Erythema	<i>er-ih-THEE-mah</i>	Redness of the skin from increased blood flow
Fibrillation	<i>fib-rih-LAY-shun</i>	Rapid, irregular, quivering muscle contractions (heart)
Fibromyalgia	<i>fy-broh-my-AL-jee-ah</i>	Chronic condition of widespread musculoskeletal pain
Fistula	<i>FIS-choo-lah</i>	Abnormal connection between two body structures
Fracture	<i>FRAK-chur</i>	Break in continuity of a bone
Gangrene	<i>GANG-green</i>	Death and decay of body tissue, usually from infection or poor blood flow
Gastroenteritis	<i>gas-troh-en-ter-Y-tis</i>	Inflammation of stomach and intestines; 'stomach flu'
Glaucoma	<i>glaw-KOH-mah</i>	Increased intraocular pressure causing optic nerve damage
Gout	<i>gowt</i>	Metabolic disorder; uric acid crystals deposited in joints
Hematoma	<i>hee-mah-TOH-mah</i>	Localized collection of clotted blood outside vessels
Hematuria	<i>hee-mah-TYOO-ree-ah</i>	Blood in the urine
Hemiplegia	<i>hem-ee-PLÉE-jee-ah</i>	Paralysis of one side of the body
Hemoptysis	<i>hee-MOP-tih-sis</i>	Coughing up blood from the respiratory tract
Hemorrhage	<i>HEM-oh-rij</i>	Excessive bleeding from damaged blood vessels
Hepatitis	<i>hep-ah-TY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the liver
Hepatomegaly	<i>hep-ah-toh-MEG-ah-lee</i>	Enlargement of the liver
Hernia	<i>HER-nee-ah</i>	Protrusion of an organ through the wall that normally contains it
Hirsutism	<i>HER-soo-tizm</i>	Excessive body hair growth in women in male-pattern distribution
Hydrocephalus	<i>hy-droh-SEF-ah-lus</i>	Excess cerebrospinal fluid in the brain ventricles
Hypercapnia	<i>hy-per-KAP-nee-ah</i>	Excess carbon dioxide in the blood

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Hyperglycemia	<i>hy-per-gly-SEE-mee-ah</i>	Elevated blood glucose levels
Hyperlipidemia	<i>hy-per-lip-ih-DEE-mee-ah</i>	Elevated lipids (cholesterol/triglycerides) in blood
Hypertension	<i>hy-per-TEN-shun</i>	Persistently elevated blood pressure ($\geq 130/80$ mmHg)
Hypoglycemia	<i>hy-poh-gly-SEE-mee-ah</i>	Abnormally low blood glucose levels
Hyponatremia	<i>hy-poh-nah-TREE-mee-ah</i>	Low sodium concentration in the blood
Hypotension	<i>hy-poh-TEN-shun</i>	Abnormally low blood pressure
Hypothyroidism	<i>hy-poh-THY-royd-izm</i>	Underactive thyroid gland; insufficient thyroid hormone
Hysterectomy	<i>his-teh-REK-toh-mee</i>	Surgical removal of the uterus
Idiopathic	<i>id-ee-oh-PATH-ik</i>	Of unknown cause or origin
Ileus	<i>IL-ee-us</i>	Obstruction of or failure of normal intestinal movement
Immunodeficiency	<i>im-yoo-noh-deh-FISH-en-see</i>	Impaired or absent immune response
Infarction	<i>in-FARK-shun</i>	Death of tissue from deprivation of blood supply
Inflammation	<i>in-flah-MAY-shun</i>	Redness, warmth, swelling, pain response to injury/infection
Ischemia	<i>is-KEE-mee-ah</i>	Inadequate blood supply to a tissue or organ
Jaundice	<i>JAWN-dis</i>	Yellowing of skin/sclera from excess bilirubin
Laceration	<i>las-er-AY-shun</i>	Torn, ragged wound in the skin or tissue
Laryngitis	<i>lar-in-JY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the larynx (voice box)
Leukemia	<i>loo-KEE-mee-ah</i>	Cancer of blood-forming tissue; excess abnormal WBCs
Leukocytosis	<i>loo-koh-sy-TOH-sis</i>	Elevated white blood cell count
Lymphadenopathy	<i>lim-fad-eh-NOP-ah-thee</i>	Disease of lymph nodes; usually refers to enlargement
Lymphoma	<i>lim-FOH-mah</i>	Cancer of the lymphatic system
Malignant	<i>mah-LIG-nant</i>	Cancerous; tends to invade and spread
Mastectomy	<i>mas-TEK-toh-mee</i>	Surgical removal of the breast
Melanoma	<i>mel-ah-NOH-mah</i>	Malignant tumor of melanocytes in skin
Meningitis	<i>men-in-JY-tis</i>	Inflammation of meninges (membranes surrounding brain/spinal cord)
Menorrhagia	<i>men-oh-RAY-jee-ah</i>	Excessive or prolonged menstrual bleeding
Metastasis	<i>meh-TAS-tah-sis</i>	Spread of cancer from primary site to distant locations
Myocardial infarction	<i>my-oh-KAR-dee-ah in-FARK-shun</i>	Heart attack; death of heart muscle from ischemia

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Myopia	<i>my-OH-pee-ah</i>	Nearsightedness; inability to see distant objects clearly
Myositis	<i>my-oh-SY-tis</i>	Inflammation of muscle tissue
Necrosis	<i>neh-KROH-sis</i>	Death of body tissue
Nephritis	<i>neh-FRY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the kidneys
Nephrolithiasis	<i>neh-roh-lih-THY-ah-sis</i>	Kidney stones
Neuropathy	<i>noo-ROP-ah-thee</i>	Disease or damage to the peripheral nerves
Nocturia	<i>nok-TYOO-ree-ah</i>	Excessive urination at night
Oliguria	<i>ol-ih-GYOO-ree-ah</i>	Decreased urine output (< 400 mL/day)
Osteoarthritis	<i>os-tee-oh-ar-THRY-tis</i>	Degenerative joint disease; cartilage breakdown
Osteomalacia	<i>os-tee-oh-mah-LAY-sh ee-ah</i>	Softening of bone from vitamin D/calcium deficiency
Osteoporosis	<i>os-tee-oh-poh-ROH-sis</i>	Decreased bone density; increased fracture risk
Palpation	<i>pal-PAY-shun</i>	Examination by touching/feeling body structures
Pancreatitis	<i>pan-kree-ah-TY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the pancreas
Paraplegia	<i>pair-ah-PL EE-jee-ah</i>	Paralysis of the lower half of the body
Pericarditis	<i>pehr-ih-kar-DY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the pericardium (sac around the heart)
Peritonitis	<i>pehr-ih-toh-NY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the peritoneum (abdominal cavity lining)
Pharyngitis	<i>fah-rin-JY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the pharynx (throat); sore throat
Phlebitis	<i>fleh-BY-tis</i>	Inflammation of a vein
Phlebotomy	<i>fleh-BOT-oh-mee</i>	Incision into a vein to draw blood
Pleural effusion	<i>PLOO-ral eh-FYOO-zhun</i>	Excess fluid in the pleural space around the lungs
Pneumonia	<i>noo-MOH-nee-ah</i>	Infection/inflammation of lung parenchyma
Pneumothorax	<i>noo-moh-THOR-aks</i>	Air in the pleural space; collapsed lung
Polycythemia	<i>pol-ee-sy-TH EE-mee-ah</i>	Excess red blood cells in the blood
Polydipsia	<i>pol-ee-DIP-see-ah</i>	Excessive thirst
Polyuria	<i>pol-ee-YOOR-ee-ah</i>	Excessive urine production
Pruritus	<i>proo-RY-tus</i>	Itching of the skin
Ptosis	<i>TOH-sis</i>	Drooping of the upper eyelid
Pulmonary embolism	<i>PUL-moh-nair-ee EM-boh-lizm</i>	Blockage of pulmonary artery by clot
Pyelonephritis	<i>py-eh-loh-neh-FRY-tis</i>	Bacterial infection of the kidney
Quadriplegia	<i>kwod-rih-PL EE-jee-ah</i>	Paralysis of all four limbs

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Rhinitis	<i>ry-NY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the nasal mucosa
Rhinorrhea	<i>ry-noh-REE-ah</i>	Discharge of mucus from the nose; runny nose
Sarcoma	<i>sar-KOH-mah</i>	Malignant tumor of connective tissue
Sciatica	<i>sy-AT-ih-kah</i>	Pain along the sciatic nerve; usually down the leg
Scoliosis	<i>skoh-lee-OH-sis</i>	Lateral curvature of the spine
Sepsis	<i>SEP-sis</i>	Life-threatening systemic response to infection
Sinusitis	<i>sy-nus-Y-tis</i>	Inflammation of the paranasal sinuses
Splenomegaly	<i>splee-noh-MEG-ah-lee</i>	Enlargement of the spleen
Stenosis	<i>steh-NOH-sis</i>	Narrowing or constriction of a passageway or orifice
Stroke (CVA)	—	Sudden neurological deficit from ischemia or hemorrhage in the brain
Syncope	<i>SIN-koh-pee</i>	Transient loss of consciousness; fainting
Tachycardia	<i>tak-ee-KAR-dee-ah</i>	Heart rate exceeding 100 beats per minute
Tachypnea	<i>tak-IP-nee-ah</i>	Rapid breathing (> 20 breaths per minute)
Tendinitis	<i>ten-dih-NY-tis</i>	Inflammation of a tendon
Thrombocytopenia	<i>throm-boh-sy-toh-PEE-nee-ah</i>	Deficiency of platelets in the blood
Thrombosis	<i>throm-BOH-sis</i>	Formation of a blood clot inside a blood vessel
Tinnitus	<i>TIN-ih-tus</i>	ringing or buzzing in the ears
Tonsillitis	<i>ton-sih-LY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the tonsils
Trachea	<i>TRAY-kee-ah</i>	Windpipe; airway between larynx and bronchi
Tracheotomy	<i>tray-kee-OT-oh-mee</i>	Surgical incision into the trachea
Ulcer	<i>UL-ser</i>	Open sore on skin or mucous membrane from tissue erosion
Uremia	<i>yoo-REE-mee-ah</i>	Excess urea and nitrogenous waste in the blood (kidney failure)
Urethritis	<i>yoo-reh-THRY-tis</i>	Inflammation of the urethra
Urticaria	<i>ur-tih-KAIR-ee-ah</i>	Hives; itchy skin reaction
Vertigo	<i>VER-tih-goh</i>	Sensation of spinning or dizziness
Wheezing	<i>WHEEZ-ing</i>	High-pitched whistling sound during breathing from airway narrowing
Xerosis	<i>zeh-ROH-sis</i>	Abnormal dryness of the skin, eyes, or mucous membranes