

Terminology in Health Care and Public Health Settings

Unit 1b Understanding Medical Words

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Prefix

- Added to the **beginning** of a term
- May add meaning such as:
 - location of organ inter– = between
 - number of parts hemi– = half
 - time (frequency) pre– = before

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Examples of Prefixes

- ab– away from
- ante– before, forward
- brady– slow
- endo– within, inner
- hyper– above, beyond
- hypo– under, deficient

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Examples of Prefixes

- infra— beneath, below
- inter— among, between
- macro— large
- micro— small
- peri— around
- post— after, behind
- pre— before, in front of

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Examples of Prefixes

- retro— backward, behind
- sub— below, under
- super— above, excess
- tachy— fast
- trans— across, through
- ultra— beyond, excess

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Suffix

- Attached to the **end** of a term
- Adds meaning such as:
 - condition –algia = pain
 - disease –itis = inflammation
 - procedure –ectomy = removal of
- **All** medical terms **must** have a suffix
 - Only mandatory word part

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Examples of Suffixes

- -algia pain
- -cise cut
- -dynia pain, swelling
- -ectasis dilatation
- -itis inflammation
- -logy study of
- -lysis destruction

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Examples of Suffixes

- -megaly enlargement, large
- -oma tumor
- -osis condition, usually abnormal
- -pathy disease
- -rrhea discharge, flow
- -sclerosis hardening
- -stenosis narrowing
- -taxis movement
- -trophy growth

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Adjective Suffixes

- Suffix may be used to convert a **word root** into a **complete** word
- Translation of these suffixes is ***pertaining to***
- New word can then be used to modify another word

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Adjective Suffix Example

- To state that a patient has an ulcer in his stomach:
 - gastr/o = stomach
 - -ic = pertaining to
 - gastric = pertaining to the stomach
 - gastric ulcer = ulcer found in the stomach

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Procedures, Diagnosis and Surgery Suffixes

- –centesis surgical puncture to remove fluid
- –ectomy cut out, surgical removal
- –gram recording or picture
- –meter device for measuring
- –ostomy surgical opening

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Procedures, Diagnosis and Surgery Suffixes

- –otomy cutting into
- –pexy surgical fixation
- –plasty surgical reconstruction
- –rrhaphy suture
- –scope instrument for viewing

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Word Building

- Putting together the various parts to form a variety of terms to convey the necessary information
- Begins with knowing the meaning of the various parts in order to select the correct ones
- Always remember the rules regarding the location of each word part

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Interpreting Medical Terms

- Term to be translated
 - echocardiogram
- Divide the term into its word parts
 - echo / cardi/ o / gram

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Interpreting Medical Terms

- Define each word part
 - echo = using ultrasonic waves
 - cardi = heartsmall intestine
 - o = combining vowel, no meaning
 - -gram = recording
- Combine the meanings of the word parts
 - Recording of a heart test using ultrasonic waves

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Singular and Plural Endings

- Many medical terms come from Greek or Latin words
- Rules for forming plurals are different from English
 - Plural of bacterium is bacteria, not bacteriums
- Other words will use English rules
 - Plural of ventricle is ventricles

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General Rules for Plurals

Word Ends In

- -a
- -ax
- -ex or -ix
- -is
- -ma
- -nx
- -on
- -us
- -um
- -y

Singular

- vertebra
- thorax
- appendix
- metastasis
- sarcoma
- phalanx
- ganglion
- nucleus
- ovum
- biopsy

Plural

- vertebrae
- thoraces
- appendices
- metastases
- sarcomata
- phalanges
- ganglia
- nuclei
- ova
- biopsies

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Abbreviations

- Commonly used to save time
- Can be confusing
- If you are concerned about confusion, spell out the term
- Do not use your own personal abbreviations

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