

# Glossary

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## A

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**Abrasion:** the removal of one or more upper levels of skin due to being scraped or by the application of friction to the skin. The resulting wound can be painful since it exposes underlying tissue and nerves to air and foreign substances.

**Abscess:** an accumulation of pus within the tissues of the body as a result of the body's defensive resistance against an infection. White blood cells surround the infection and create the accumulation of pus. Deep infections in the body can cause serious injury to internal organs and tissues.

**Acidosis:** a condition in which the PH of the blood is low and there is excess acid in the body due to the depletion of alkaline or an abnormal increase in the level of acid. This is often associated with kidney and lung diseases and diabetic ketoacidosis.

**Acute:** sudden and relatively severe onset of a disease or disease symptoms that then subside within a short period of time. This sudden onset of symptoms can be indicative of numerous conditions and illnesses.

**Adenitis:** the inflammation of the lymph node or a gland. The inflammation can be indicative of several conditions including head lice, insect bites, a sore throat, an infection, and scarlet fever. The pain can be acute or low level.

**Adenoids:** glands commonly associated with the tonsils. The term refers to the lymphoid tissue forming the pharyngeal tonsils on the posterior wall of the nasopharynx.

**Adrenal glands:** located above both kidneys and consisting of the medulla and cortex sections. These endocrine glands produce hormones that include adrenaline, epinephrine, aldosterone, and cortisone. These hormones control electrolyte and fluid levels in the body and contribute to the proper levels of sex hormones.

**Amblyopia:** refers to reduced vision in an eye with no known or pathologic cause. The vision may be significantly worse than in the other eye and is not easily correctable.

**Ambulatory:** involves a person's ability to move from one place to another by walking. The term generally applies to those capable of moving themselves without significant mechanical assistance and who are not bedridden.

**Anesthesia:** a group of drugs known by the function of causing unconsciousness or localized numbness during medical procedures and surgery. A local or regional application causes a part of the body to be numb, usually for the purpose of minor surgery.

**Aneurysm:** the dilation of a vein or artery associated with the heart. The expansion or widening causes weakness in the wall of the vein or artery and an enlargement is subject to rupture.

**Angioma:** usually a harmless tumor that forms on the skin or in the upper skin tissues at random locations on the body. Treatment is generally for cosmetic reasons and accomplished by outpatient surgery. The cause and preventative measures are not known.

**Anosmia:** a condition that affects the ability to smell on either a temporary or a permanent basis. This condition may affect one or more odors or may include the entire spectrum of odors. The result is the additional loss of the ability to taste food which normally depends on the successful functioning of the olfactory receptor neurons.

**Antidote:** includes treatments, medicines, and other remedies that combat illness, infection, poisoning, and other adverse influences on the body. Antidotes are generally responsive to the symptoms with the goal of restoring the body to health.

**Aorta:** the artery that originates from the left ventricle of the heart and extends through the chest and abdomen. At this point the artery divides into the two iliac arteries that descend into the legs. This is the largest artery in the body and carries a substantial amount of oxygenated blood to the upper body organs, arms, neck, and head.



**Apnea:** a common sleep disturbance with serious symptoms that can be life-threatening such as extreme daytime fatigue. The two major types are obstructive and central apnea. Obstructive apnea results from relaxing muscles in the throat and central apnea is caused by the brain failing to signal appropriate muscles to breathe. Snoring is a common symptom.

**Arthralgia:** is a condition involving possible severe pain along a single or a group of nerves in a joint. The causes are varied and include multiple medical problems such as joint injuries, bursitis, infections, and osteoarthritis. Ross River Virus and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome are commonly associated with this condition.

**Associate's Degree in Nursing (ASN):** typically a two-year college degree with the goal of teaching and training nurses. Many nursing colleges require additional training that supplements the written coursework such as on-site hospital instruction and internship.

**Atrophy:** the process of the body's self-absorption of tissues. This condition encompasses the partial or complete withering of body parts due to malnourishment, disease, poor blood circulation, or nonuse.

**Auto-transfusion:** the reusing of blood from a clean site or wound that has been lost during an operation or post-operatively. It involves the collection, anticoagulation, filtration, and reusing of the same blood.

## B

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**Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN):** an academic degree earned usually in four to five years that both prepares graduates to take the NCLEX, the examination required for licensure as a Registered Nurse, and to participate in a broad range of nursing roles, functions and environments.

**Bile:** a bitter, yellowish-green fluid produced by the liver, stored in the gall bladder, and secreted into the small intestine where it aids digestion, especially of fats.

**Blood poisoning:** a layperson's term for the medical condition bacteremia, the potentially life-threatening presence of bacteria in the blood. Observable symptoms include fever, chills, rapid breathing, and mental confusion. Patients deteriorate quickly and require immediate medical attention.

**Bone marrow:** the soft, fatty tissue that fills the inside of most bones and is responsible for producing red and white blood cells.

**Botulism:** a disease caused by bacteria that attacks the nervous system and which can be fatal if left untreated. The bacteria are often introduced into the human organism by improperly prepared food, but the bacteria can also be air-borne or introduced through a wound.

**Bradycardia:** a heart beat rate of less than 60 beats per minute in a resting adult. Symptoms include fainting, dizziness, tiring easily especially during physical activity, shortness of breath, disturbed sleep, mental confusion, and fatigue. Young adults and conditioned athletes may have heart rates of 60 beats or less per minute and not suffer from bradycardia.

**Bruxism:** commonly called teeth clenching or teeth grinding. Many people who suffer from bruxism do so after falling asleep. Mouth guards or splints are often prescribed to prevent damage to the teeth, jaw pain, and ear aches, and to reduce or eliminate secondary suffering from lack of sleep.

## C

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**Cardiac:** of or relating to the heart. For example, *tachycardia* is a too-fast heart rate, while *bradycardia* is a too-slow heart rate. *Myocardial* infarction is commonly known as a heart attack. *Cardiac* tamponade occurs when the membrane that surrounds the heart fills with fluid. And an *electrocardiogram* is a graph of electric conductivity across the heart muscle used to see tissue damage.

**Catalepsy:** a condition characterized by a lack of response of muscles to stimuli giving the appearance of muscles being "stuck." Catalepsy may be physiologically triggered, for example with Parkinson disease or as the result of ingestion or withdrawal from some medications or it may be a psychological defense response to shock. It can, in some cases, be induced through hypnosis.

**Catheter:** a flexible or rigid tube that is used to channel fluid into or out of an organ or vein. For example, a Foley catheter is used to drain the bladder, while a venous catheter is used to administer drugs, chemotherapy, and hydration, and for transfusions.

**Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA):** a designation for people who have passed the nationally recognized Nurse Assistant Competency Exam. They work under the supervision of RNs or LVNs to provide basic bedside care.

**Colic:** a prolonged period of crying that infants three weeks to three months old are likely to exhibit, usually at a certain time each day, and often in the evening, that is not caused by hunger or a need for diaper change. Colic is not a disease, but if it is accompanied by fever, diarrhea, vomiting, rash or other physical traits, infants should be examined by their pediatricians; for sudden onset of severe or multiple symptoms.

**Colitis:** an inflammation of the colon (the last section of the large intestine leading to the rectum). There are different types of this condition, some only identifiable through laboratory tests. Although the cause is still uncertain, symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, and rectal bleeding.

**Cyanosis:** a blue coloring of the skin, lips, and fingernails due to lack of oxygen in the blood. Infants and children who exhibit this bluish color may have congenital heart defects and must be evaluated by their pediatrician. In adults, the bluish color may indicate lack of oxygen in the blood or poor circulation due to other health or lifestyle issues.

## D

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**Desensitization:** a type of treatment used to help people overcome anxiety, compulsions, and other physiological and psychological disorders by exposing them in a safe environment to face their fears or to practice new behaviors in place of their fear responses.

**Devascularization:** the interruption of the blood supply to a part of the body by blocking or removing blood vessels.

**Dysphagia:** difficulty swallowing which may be accompanied by pain in the esophagus or chest. Although anyone can suffer from this condition it is more prevalent in the elderly. Root causes may be gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD), Parkinson's disease, stroke, trauma to the head or spinal cord, and some forms of cancer.

## E

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**Embolism:** the blockage of a vein or artery by an air bubble, blood clot or other foreign body. The result is that cells on the other side of the blockage cannot get oxygen and nutrients, and cannot have their waste removed, leading to the death of those cells, and which may ultimately lead to the death of the organism.

**Enteritis:** inflammation of the small intestines, usually caused by food or drink that is contaminated with bacteria or virus, although it can also be caused by Crohn's disease and certain drugs including cocaine and radiation treatments. Symptoms occur hours to days after exposure and may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, dehydration, loss of appetite, and (rarely) vomiting.

**Exanthem:** a wide spread rash which is usually caused by a virus, but may be caused by bacteria, exposure to an irritant, or be the result of an autoimmune reaction. The rash may cover any part of the body and may be itchy or blister. Examples of these types of rashes are measles and poison ivy.

## F

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**Fibrillation:** irregular twitching of the heart, or other muscle. Atrial fibrillation occurs in the two upper chambers of the heart, while ventricular fibrillation occurs in the two lower chambers of the heart. Ventricular fibrillation can lead to sudden cardiac death, while atrial fibrillation is most often not life threatening.

## G

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**Gastritis:** the inflammation of the stomach's lining, which can cause stomach pains, indigestion, abdominal bloating, nausea, and vomiting. It can be caused by many things, including the excessive use of alcohol or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

**Gastrointestinal:** the digestive system, which, in humans, is formed into a long passage that runs from the mouth to the anus. It is in this passage that food passes to be digested and absorbed, and where wastes are excreted.



## H

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**Heart failure:** the inability of the heart to pump enough blood into the body, which can cause shortness of breath, coughing, and swollen ankles. This is different than cardiac arrest, which means blood is not being pumped into the body at all, and is more likely to cause sudden death.

**Hemangioma:** a common, non-cancerous, tumor (or growth) on the skin that is filled with small blood vessels. They are raised and often purplish or reddish in color. Mostly, they appear at birth or shortly after birth and disappear around the age of ten.

**Hematology:** the branch of medicine that is concerned with blood. Hematologists work in internal medicine, physiology, pathology, clinical laboratory work, and pediatrics, and study blood, blood-forming organs, and blood diseases.

**Hypertension:** the common medical condition of chronic (persistent, long-lasting) high blood pressure, also known as HT. It is linked to strokes, heart attacks, heart failure, and chronic kidney disease. Even moderate HT shortens life expectancy.

**Hypoxia:** when the body tissues are not receiving enough oxygen. When tissue hypoxia occurs, a specific region of the body is not getting enough oxygen. With generalized hypoxia, the entire body is suffering from inadequate oxygen. Common in individuals climbing to high altitudes or participating in deep water dives.

## I

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**Idiopathic:** when a disease or condition, such as epilepsy, occurs suddenly and from an unidentifiable cause. Some medical professionals see these conditions as occurring randomly and for no bigger reason--others view them as unidentifiable because no one yet has discovered their causes.

**Incontinence:** the inability to control one's urine excretion or bowel movements. Sometimes the condition is chronic (persistent and long-lasting), while other times it is the result of another factor and will clear. For instance, transient (temporary) incontinence can occur when a person is suffering a urinary tract infection.

**Incubate:** to keep eggs, organisms, or living tissue at ideal environmental conditions (such as the ideal heat level) for growth and development to occur. In birds, it involves sitting on eggs. For humans, medical technology has expanded to include things like stem cells.



**Intravenous:** simply put, it means "within a vein." It is most known for Intravenous (IV) therapy, in which medicine, food, or liquids are kept in a bag and sent through a tube and a hollow needle to enter into a human vein to treat people.

**Ischemia:** a decrease in blood flow to an organ, tissue, or body part, caused by a blockage in blood vessels. Without adequate blood flow, the body part suffers a shortage of oxygen, glucose, and other nutrients found in blood. This leads to tissue damage.

## J

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**Jaundice:** causes yellowing in the skin and in the whites of the eyes. It occurs when bilirubin levels are high in the body. Bilirubin is the predominant orange pigment of bile, the fluid excreted by the liver.

## L

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**Laceration:** a type of wound to the body. Specifically, it is the tearing of the skin and subcutaneous (under the skin) tissues as a result of blunt impacts, such as being punched or banging the head onto another object.

**Lacrimation:** simply, the shedding of tears, or crying. It can be caused by emotions, extreme pain, allergies, chemical irritants, and certain diseases or disorders.

**Lateral:** an anatomical term that means on or towards the side of the body or a part of the body. For instance, the arms are lateral parts of the body, the ears are lateral parts of the head, and the inferior nasal conchae project from the lateral wall of the nasal cavity.

**Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN):** nurses who have been licensed to provide basic health care services to the sick and injured, under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN). To become an LPN, one needs to complete an LPN training program, which usually lasts for one year. In some states, LPNs are referred to as LVNs.

**Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN):** another word for a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). They care for the sick and injured and are under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN). LVN/LPN training programs generally last for one year. Texas and California refer to these nurses as LVNs while the other states use the term LPN.

**Lichen:** any of several skin diseases that cause the skin to develop into hard thick lesions. Lichen skin diseases are named after lichens found on tree trunks, rocks, and bare ground, which cause crusty patches or bushy growths to appear on these surfaces.

**Lingua:** simply, a tongue. Specifically, a movable mass of muscular tissue located in the oral cavity (mouth) and covered with mucous membrane (a membrane that secretes mucus, a thick fluid that acts as a protective barrier and lubricant).

**Lobectomy:** the surgical removal of a lobe from any organ of the body, including the brain, lung, and thyroid. Lobes are the roundish, projected parts of an organ. But they also are used as ways to divide different functions of organs, such as frontal lobes and parietal lobes of the brain. Lymphatic system: a network of conduits (structures such as pipes, channels, or passages that carry fluid) that carry lymph. Lymph is the fluid found between cells of the human body that bathes and surrounds the cells.

**Lymphedema:** the swelling of tissue (usually in the legs) caused by retention of fluid in the lymph vessels. Lymph vessels make up a network of thin tubes that carry lymph (a clear watery fluid that bathes and surrounds the cells) into tissues all over the body.

## M

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**Master's of Science in Nursing (MSN):** an advanced degree program of study for nursing available to those who have completed their bachelor's degrees in nursing. MSN programs usually take two years to complete, and can lead to careers in advanced nursing: clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, nurse-midwives, and nurse practitioners.

**MRI:** Magnetic Resonance Imaging, a non-invasive medical imaging technique. It uses magnetic forces (not radiation) to capture detailed images of the body.

**Myocarditis:** the inflammation of the muscular tissue of the heart called myocardium (plural myocardia). Myocardia surround and power the heart.

## N

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**Neoplasm:** simply, a tumor. Specifically, it is a new growth of tissue on or in the body that serves no physiological function. These may be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Malignant neoplasm must be removed, while benign neoplasm is watched and sometimes removed.

## O

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**Obstetrics:** the study of medicine concerning the care of women during and after pregnancy, and care of their unborn children.

**Occiput:** the anatomical term for the back (posterior) part of the head. Trauma to this part of the head can lead to a rare but serious head injury called basilar skull fracture, or the fracture of the base of the skull, which can lead to meningitis (the inflammation of brain membranes and spinal cord).

**Ostomy:** a surgical opening in the skin to allow for the drainage of urine, the elimination of waste (such as from the intestines), or for the passage of air. For this, a catheter is used. A catheter is a hollow flexible tube inserted through the opening of the skin to a body cavity, duct, or vessel.

## P

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**Paracentesis:** a medical procedure in which a needle is inserted into a body cavity, most often the peritoneal cavity in the abdomen, in order to drain fluid from the cavity. It is used for many reasons, including to relieve abdominal pressure from ascites (an accumulation of abdominal fluid) and to diagnose metastatic cancer (the spread of cancer from one organ to another).

**Paroxysm:** a violent attack: either a rapid onset or a recurrence of symptoms, or the increased intensity of symptoms, of a disease. For instance, the onset of fever, chills, and sweats in a person suffering malaria.

**Perforation:** an abnormal hole in a hollow organ, such as the bowel (intestine), caused by rupture or injury. A perforated bowel causes the waste of the bowels to spill into the otherwise sterile abdominal cavity. Most of the time this spillage requires surgery to wash out the abdomen.

## Q

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**Quadriplegia:** the partial or total loss of the use of all a person's limbs (legs and arms), resulting from an injury that damages the brain or spinal cord. Most of the time, quadriplegics lose both sensation and bodily control (such as of bowel movements). Quadriplegia is otherwise known as tetraplegia.

**Quarantine:** isolation of a patient carrying a dangerous contagious disease. While in definition quarantine can be voluntary or not, the term is most often associated with enforced isolation. The practice began in the 14th century to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics. Today a list of quarantineable diseases is enforced by Executive Order, and includes cholera, smallpox, and SARS.

**Quickening:** when a pregnant woman first feels the movement of her fetus, usually between sixteen and twenty weeks of pregnancy. It is often described as feeling like the fluttering of a butterfly.

## R

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**Radiology:** the use of imaging technology to diagnose or treat disease. Imaging technology--including radiation, ultrasound, X-rays, computerized tomography (CT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)--captures images of the internal body.

**Registered Nurse (RN):** health care providers who treat patients, educate the public about health, and offer advice to patients' family members. Many RNs have their bachelor's degrees, and most (60 percent) work in hospitals. RNs also oversee Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), who provide more basic medical care to patients.

**Regurgitation:** the backward flow of a fluid, especially refers to liquid or food flowing back up into the mouth, or to blood flowing backward through a damaged heart valve.

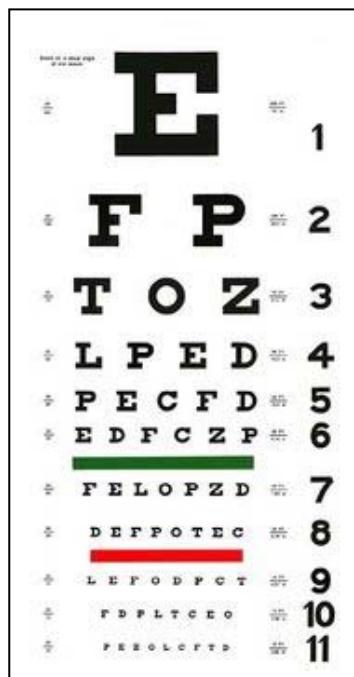
## S

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**Sclerosis:** hardening or stiffening of tissues, due to growth of fibrous tissue or an increase in interstitial tissue (as in multiple sclerosis); a disease characterized by sclerosis. The term is used in compound names of various specific conditions.

**Scotoma:** specific vision impairment, a blind or impaired spot in an otherwise relatively normal visual field.

**Sensorium:** the part of the brain concerned with sensory reception, processing, and interpretation. Sensorium enables the brain to perceive sensation; a state of sensory consciousness--collective cognitive and intellectual functions.



**Sepsis:** a response to infection, particularly caused by bacterial infection, characterized by fever and other symptoms including elevated white blood cell count; the infected condition itself, systemic inflammatory response syndrome.

**Snellen's Chart or snellen chart:** the familiar vision test of black letters in various sizes, on a white background, measuring vision at various distances, developed by Hermann Snellen, a Dutch ophthalmologist.

**Speculum:** an instrument inserted into a body passage to hold open that passage for purpose of examination, medication, or removal of a sample from the passage.

**Stenosis:** a stricture, an abnormal constriction or narrowing of the diameter of a bodily orifice or passageway, often a blood vessel.

**Stridor:** an abnormal and harsh sound heard during respiration, usually inspiration, in cases of obstruction of an upper air passage such as the throat or voice box, often indicative of a medical emergency.

**Superinfection:** a secondary infection caused by an agent that is immune to the antibiotics used to treat for the initial infection, occurring during the course of the initial infection.

## T

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**Tendinitis:** inflammation of a tendon (the tissue which attaches muscle to bone), characterized by tenderness, pain and limitation of movement.

**Tetany:** a condition associated with calcium imbalance, including spasms of the muscles and the larynx, cramps, and abnormal sensations.

**Toxemia:** the presence of toxic substances in the blood due to absorption of toxins from infection, or the dissemination of other toxic substances such as by-products of protein metabolism.

**Transfusion:** the transference of blood or a blood component to an artery or vein to someone who has lost blood, such as from surgery or accident.

**Tussis:** a cough, a violent expulsion of air, a defense reflex, typically to clear the lung airways of mucus, fluid, or other substance.

## U

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**Urogenital:** the system having to do with the functions of excretion or reproduction, or with genitals, internal or external; the genitourinary system.

## V

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**Vaccine:** a preparation that includes an agent made from a living, weakened, or killed microorganism administered to produce resistance or to increase resistance to a particular disease--a biological preparation giving or increasing immunity to a specific disease.

**Vasoconstriction:** narrowing of the cavity of a blood vessel, the contracting of the muscular walls of those vessels, especially as a result of vasomotor disorder.

## W

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**Withdrawal:** the abrupt discontinuance of use of a medicinal or recreational drug; the symptoms associated with that discontinuance. Also can mean a retreat from reality, as in schizophrenia.

## Y

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**Yellow fever:** an acute viral infection characterized by fever, jaundice, headache, and vomiting, and transmitted by the bites of infected mosquitoes, occurring in South American and Africa.