
Certified Professional Course in Writing Skills in Medical English

Medical Terminology

A

Acute: A term used to describe a disease or condition that has a rapid onset and a short duration. For example, acute bronchitis typically lasts for a few weeks.

Allergy: An abnormal reaction of the immune system to a normally harmless substance, such as pollen, dust, or certain foods. Symptoms can range from mild itching to severe anaphylaxis.

Anatomy: The study of the structure of the human body and its parts. Understanding anatomy is essential for medical professionals to diagnose and treat various conditions.

Anemia: A condition characterized by a deficiency of red blood cells or hemoglobin in the blood, leading to symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, and pale skin.

Anesthesia: The use of medication to induce a loss of sensation or consciousness during medical procedures. Anesthetics can be administered locally or generally, depending on the type of surgery.

Antibiotic: A type of medication that kills or inhibits the growth of bacteria. Antibiotics are commonly used to treat bacterial infections but are ineffective against viral infections.

Antigen: A substance that triggers an immune response in the body, leading to the production of antibodies. Antigens can be foreign invaders like bacteria or viruses, or they can be self-produced proteins.

Arrhythmia: An abnormal heart rhythm that can manifest as a slow, fast, or irregular heartbeat. Arrhythmias can be harmless or life-threatening and may require medical intervention.

Arthritis: A group of conditions that cause inflammation and stiffness in the joints. The most common types of arthritis include osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Aspiration: The act of inhaling fluid or foreign objects into the lungs, which can lead to respiratory problems such as pneumonia. Aspiration can occur during surgery or in individuals with swallowing difficulties.

Assessment: The evaluation of a patient's condition by a healthcare provider to determine the underlying cause of symptoms. Assessments can include physical exams, lab tests, and imaging studies.

Atherosclerosis: A condition characterized by the buildup of plaque in the arteries, leading to reduced blood flow and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Atherosclerosis is often associated with high cholesterol levels.

Autoimmune: A disorder in which the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells and tissues in the body, leading to inflammation and tissue damage. Examples of autoimmune diseases include rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

B

Bacteria: Single-celled microorganisms that can cause infections in the body. Bacteria can be both harmful and beneficial, with some strains used in the production of antibiotics and fermented foods.

Biopsy: A procedure in which a small sample of tissue is removed from the body for examination under a microscope. Biopsies are commonly used to diagnose cancer and other conditions.

Blood pressure: The force exerted by circulating blood on the walls of the blood vessels. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg) and consists of systolic (when the heart contracts) and diastolic

(when the heart relaxes) readings.

Brachial artery: The major blood vessel in the upper arm that supplies blood to the arm and hand. The brachial artery is commonly used to measure blood pressure and obtain blood samples.

Bronchitis: Inflammation of the bronchial tubes in the lungs, leading to symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and chest discomfort. Bronchitis can be acute or chronic, with viral infections being a common cause.

Bulimia: An eating disorder characterized by binge eating followed by purging through vomiting or excessive exercise. Bulimia can lead to serious health complications, including electrolyte imbalances and dental issues.

C

Cancer: A group of diseases characterized by the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells that can invade surrounding tissues. Cancer can affect any part of the body and can be treated with surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy.

Cardiology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of heart-related conditions. Cardiologists specialize in managing heart attacks, heart failure, and arrhythmias.

Carotid artery: The major blood vessel in the neck that supplies blood to the brain, face, and neck. The carotid artery can become narrowed or blocked, leading to an increased risk of stroke.

Cellulitis: A bacterial skin infection that causes redness, swelling, and tenderness in the affected area.

Cellulitis can occur anywhere on the body and may require antibiotics for treatment.

Chronic: A term used to describe a disease or condition that persists over a long period of time. Chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension require ongoing management to control symptoms and prevent complications.

Cirrhosis: A late stage of scarring (fibrosis) of the liver caused by many forms of liver diseases and conditions, such as hepatitis and chronic alcoholism. The liver carries out several necessary functions, including detoxifying harmful substances in your body, cleaning your blood and making vital nutrients. Cirrhosis can lead to a number of complications, including liver cancer.

Congenital: Present at birth. Congenital disorders can be genetic, developmental, or environmental in origin and may require medical intervention to manage symptoms.

Coronary artery: Blood vessels that supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle. Blockages in the coronary arteries can lead to heart attacks and other cardiovascular complications.

Cyst: A sac-like pocket of tissue that can contain fluid, air, or other substances. Cysts can be benign or malignant and may require drainage or surgical removal.

D

Dehydration: A condition characterized by the loss of water and electrolytes from the body, leading to symptoms such as thirst, dry skin, and fatigue. Severe dehydration can be life-threatening and may require intravenous fluids for treatment.

Diabetes: A chronic condition characterized by high levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood. Diabetes can be type 1 (insulin-dependent) or type 2 (non-insulin-dependent) and requires lifestyle modifications and medication to manage.

Diagnostic: Relating to the identification of a disease or condition based on signs, symptoms, and test

results. Diagnostic tests can include blood work, imaging studies, and biopsies.

Diarrhea: A common gastrointestinal condition characterized by loose or watery stools. Diarrhea can be acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term) and is often caused by infections or dietary factors.

Dialysis: A medical procedure that filters waste products and excess fluids from the blood when the kidneys are no longer able to perform this function. Dialysis is used to treat end-stage renal disease.

Dislocation: A displacement of a bone from its normal position in a joint, often caused by trauma or injury. Dislocations can result in pain, swelling, and limited range of motion.

Diverticulitis: Inflammation or infection of small pouches (diverticula) that can form in the walls of the colon. Diverticulitis can cause abdominal pain, fever, and changes in bowel habits and may require antibiotics for treatment.

Drug interaction: A change in the effects of a medication when taken with another substance, such as food, alcohol, or another drug. Drug interactions can alter the effectiveness or safety of a medication.

Dyspnea: Difficult or labored breathing that can be caused by conditions such as asthma, heart failure, or pneumonia. Dyspnea can be a sign of a serious medical emergency and may require immediate medical attention.

E

Edema: Swelling caused by excess fluid trapped in the body's tissues. Edema can be a symptom of conditions such as heart failure, kidney disease, or liver cirrhosis.

Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG): A test that records the electrical activity of the heart to detect abnormal rhythms and diagnose heart conditions. An ECG is a non-invasive procedure performed in a clinic or hospital setting.

Embolism: A blockage of a blood vessel by a foreign substance, such as a blood clot or air bubble. Embolisms can lead to serious complications, including stroke or pulmonary embolism.

Endoscopy: A procedure in which a flexible tube with a camera is used to visualize the inside of the digestive tract or other body cavities. Endoscopy can help diagnose conditions such as ulcers, polyps, and tumors.

Epistaxis: Medical term for nosebleed. Epistaxis can be caused by dry air, trauma, or underlying medical conditions and is usually self-limiting.

Exacerbation: A sudden worsening of symptoms in a chronic disease, such as asthma or COPD.

Exacerbations may require additional treatment to control symptoms and prevent complications.

Excretion: The process by which waste products are eliminated from the body. Organs involved in excretion include the kidneys, liver, and lungs.

F

Fibrosis: The formation of excess fibrous connective tissue in an organ or tissue in response to injury or inflammation. Fibrosis can impair normal organ function and lead to complications.

Fracture: A break or crack in a bone caused by trauma, overuse, or underlying medical conditions. Fractures can be classified as closed (no skin break) or open (skin break) and may require immobilization or surgery for treatment.

G

Gastritis: Inflammation of the lining of the stomach, leading to symptoms such as stomach pain, nausea,

and bloating. Gastritis can be acute or chronic and is often caused by infections or irritants.

Gastroenteritis: Inflammation of the stomach and intestines, leading to symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Gastroenteritis is commonly caused by viral or bacterial infections.

Glaucoma: A group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve and can lead to vision loss. Glaucoma is often associated with increased pressure in the eye and requires ongoing treatment to prevent progression.

Gynecology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the female reproductive system and the health of women. Gynecologists specialize in conditions such as menstrual disorders, infertility, and gynecological cancers.

H

Hematology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the study of blood and blood disorders.

Hematologists specialize in conditions such as anemia, leukemia, and hemophilia.

Hepatitis: Inflammation of the liver caused by viral infections, alcohol consumption, or autoimmune disorders. Hepatitis can be acute or chronic and may lead to liver damage if left untreated.

Hernia: A protrusion of an organ or tissue through a weak spot in the abdominal wall. Hernias can be inguinal (groin), umbilical (belly button), or hiatal (upper stomach) and may require surgical repair.

Hypertension: High blood pressure that can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage.

Hypertension is often asymptomatic but can be managed with lifestyle changes and medication.

I

Immunization: The process of making an individual immune to a specific infectious disease through vaccination. Immunizations help prevent the spread of communicable diseases and protect public health.

Incision: A surgical cut made in the skin or tissue to access an underlying structure, such as an organ or blood vessel. Incisions are closed with sutures or staples after the procedure.

Infection: The invasion of the body by harmful microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi. Infections can cause symptoms such as fever, pain, and swelling and may require antibiotics for treatment.

Inflammation: The body's response to injury or infection, characterized by redness, swelling, heat, and pain.

Inflammation is a normal part of the healing process but can become chronic in some conditions.

Influenza: A respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus, leading to symptoms such as fever, cough, and body aches. Influenza can be prevented with an annual flu vaccine.

K

Kidney: An organ responsible for filtering waste products from the blood and regulating fluid balance in the body. The kidneys also produce hormones that control blood pressure and red blood cell production.

Kinesiology: The study of human movement and the mechanics of the body. Kinesiology is used in physical therapy, sports medicine, and exercise science to improve performance and prevent injuries.

L

Laceration: A deep cut or tear in the skin or tissue caused by trauma or injury. Lacerations may require sutures or staples to close and prevent infection.

Laryngitis: Inflammation of the larynx (voice box) that can cause hoarseness, sore throat, and difficulty speaking. Laryngitis is often caused by viral infections or vocal strain.

Lymphoma: A type of cancer that originates in the lymphatic system, which is part of the body's immune

system. Lymphoma can be Hodgkin's or non-Hodgkin's and requires specialized treatment.

M

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI): A diagnostic imaging technique that uses magnetic fields and radio waves to produce detailed images of the body's internal structures. MRI is commonly used to visualize the brain, spine, and joints.

Mammogram: A low-dose X-ray of the breast used to detect early signs of breast cancer. Mammograms are recommended for women over the age of 40 as part of routine screening.

Menopause: The natural process in which a woman's menstrual periods cease, marking the end of fertility. Menopause is typically diagnosed after 12 consecutive months without menstruation.

Meningitis: Inflammation of the membranes (meninges) surrounding the brain and spinal cord, usually caused by viral or bacterial infections. Meningitis can be life-threatening and requires prompt treatment.

Migraine: A neurological condition characterized by recurring headaches that can be severe and debilitating. Migraines may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound.

Myocardial infarction: Medical term for heart attack. A myocardial infarction occurs when blood flow to the heart muscle is blocked, leading to tissue damage and potential complications.

N

Nephrology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of kidney disorders.

Nephrologists specialize in conditions such as kidney stones, chronic kidney disease, and renal failure.

Neurology: The branch of medicine that focuses on disorders of the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and nerves. Neurologists diagnose and treat conditions such as epilepsy, stroke, and multiple sclerosis.

Neurosurgery: A surgical specialty that focuses on the treatment of disorders of the nervous system, including the brain, spine, and peripheral nerves. Neurosurgeons perform procedures such as brain tumor removal and spinal fusion.

Normal saline: A sterile solution of sodium chloride (salt) in water that is used for intravenous hydration and flushing wounds. Normal saline has the same concentration of salt as the body's cells and is well-tolerated.

Nutritionist: A healthcare professional who specializes in the study of nutrition and its effects on health.

Nutritionists provide dietary recommendations and meal plans to promote overall wellness.

O

Oncology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Oncologists specialize in the management of various types of cancer using chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery.

Ophthalmology: The branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders.

Ophthalmologists perform eye exams, prescribe corrective lenses, and perform surgical procedures such as cataract removal.

Orthopedics: The branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, including fractures, arthritis, and sports injuries. Orthopedic surgeons specialize in surgical interventions to restore function and mobility.

Osteoporosis: A condition characterized by weakened bones that are prone to fractures. Osteoporosis is more common in postmenopausal women and older adults and can be managed with lifestyle

modifications and medication.

P

Palliative care: Medical care that focuses on relieving symptoms and improving quality of life for patients with serious illnesses. Palliative care can be provided alongside curative treatment to address physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Pandemic: An outbreak of a disease that occurs over a large geographic area and affects an exceptionally high number of people. Pandemics can have significant social, economic, and healthcare consequences.

Pediatrics: The branch of medicine that focuses on the health and development of infants, children, and adolescents. Pediatricians provide preventive care, vaccinations, and treatment for childhood illnesses.

Pharmacology: The study of how drugs interact with the body and how they can be used to treat medical conditions. Pharmacologists research drug mechanisms, side effects, and interactions to improve patient outcomes.

Physical therapy: A form of rehabilitative healthcare that focuses on improving mobility, strength, and function after injury or illness. Physical therapists use exercises, manual techniques, and modalities to help patients regain independence.

Placenta: An organ that develops during pregnancy to provide nutrients and oxygen to the fetus and remove waste products. The placenta is expelled after childbirth and plays a crucial role in fetal development.

Pneumonia: Inflammation of the air sacs in the lungs, leading to symptoms such as cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. Pneumonia can be caused by bacteria, viruses, or fungi and may require antibiotics for treatment.

Prescription: A written order from a healthcare provider for a specific medication or treatment. Prescriptions are filled by pharmacists and must be taken as directed to achieve the desired therapeutic effect.

Prognosis: The likely course and outcome of a disease based on factors such as the patient's age, overall health, and response to treatment. Prognosis can help guide healthcare decisions and treatment plans.

Q

Quarantine: A period of isolation to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Quarantine may be required