



Let's face it, there's a *mountain* of medical terms to learn. Whichever area you work in, some medical words you'll just have to understand. But nobody wants to swallow a medical dictionary to do it.

Our list of the medical terms you need to know includes essential medical definitions, but helps you identify a quicker path to learning them. Understand first how to memorize medical terminology and the rest will come easily.

Call it your medical terminology cheat sheet if you like, but as healthcare students get ready for their final tests and exams, this list helps up your knowledge, fast.

### **How to Study Medical Terminology: Start at the Root**

First of all, let's look at the root of some important medical terms. Often, once you have a handle on these, the rest will come easily.

We use affixes all the time in everyday language without even thinking about it. They change the meaning of the original word: A prefix (in front of a word) or suffix (at the end) can put an unknown word into perspective. For example, words beginning with "aden-" or "adeno-" always relate to the glands.

Here are some more medical terminology prefixes:

**Brachi/o** – Arm  
**Cardi/o** – Heart  
**Cyt/o** – Cell  
**Derm/a, dermat/o, dermat/o** – Skin  
**Encephal/o** – Brain  
**Gastr/o** – Stomach  
**Hemat/o** – Blood  
**Hist/o, histi/o** – Tissue  
**Intestin/o** – Intestine  
**Lapar/o** – Abdomen, loin or flank  
**My/o** – Muscle  
**Neur/o** – Nerve  
**Ocul/o** – Eye  
**Ophthalm/o** – Eyes  
**Or/o** – Mouth  
**Ot/o** – Ear  
**Pulmon/o** – Lungs

And for those of you who aren't up on your Latin:

**Mono/uni** – One  
**Bi** – Two  
**Tri** – Three  
**Ab** – Away from  
**Ad** – Toward  
**Ecto/exo** – Outside  
**Endo** – Inside  
**Epi** – Upon

### **Structure: Getting to the Ends**

Here are some examples of common medical terminology with suffixes:

Pain terms end with **-algia**.

Blood terms end in **-emia**.

Inflammation is **-itis**.  
A breaking down is **-lysis**.  
Relating to disease is **-opathy**.  
Breathing terms end with **-pnea**.

When you understand where common medical terminology stems from, it's far easier to know where or what a term refers to.

## **Basic Medical Terminology List**

Now that word formation makes more sense, we can move onto specific terms and common language used in healthcare. Although this list isn't exhaustive, it can still be used as the basis for a quickfire medical terminology test to see how you do.

Allied health workers have all manner of different [motivations for joining healthcare](#). Yours will be unique, too. However, there are umbrella terms and departmental definitions that link them all together. Here are some examples:

**Anatomy:** Parts of the body and its general structure.

**Gynecology:** Study and treatment of the female urinary tract and reproductive organs.

**Hematology:** Treatment of blood diseases and malignancies.

**Microbiology:** Related to bacterial and viral infections.

**Neonatal:** Special care for newborn babies with high dependency needs.

**Neurology:** Related to the disorders of the brain, spinal cord, or general nervous system.

**Oncology:** Chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

**Pathology:** The names for disorders and diseases.

**Pediatrics:** Medical assistance of infants.

**Psychiatry:** The study and treatment of mental disorders.

**Rheumatology:** Related to musculoskeletal disorders (bones, joints, muscles, etc.).

**Surgery:** Physical operative procedures.

**Urology:** Related to problems with the bladder and kidneys.

## Key Parts of The Body

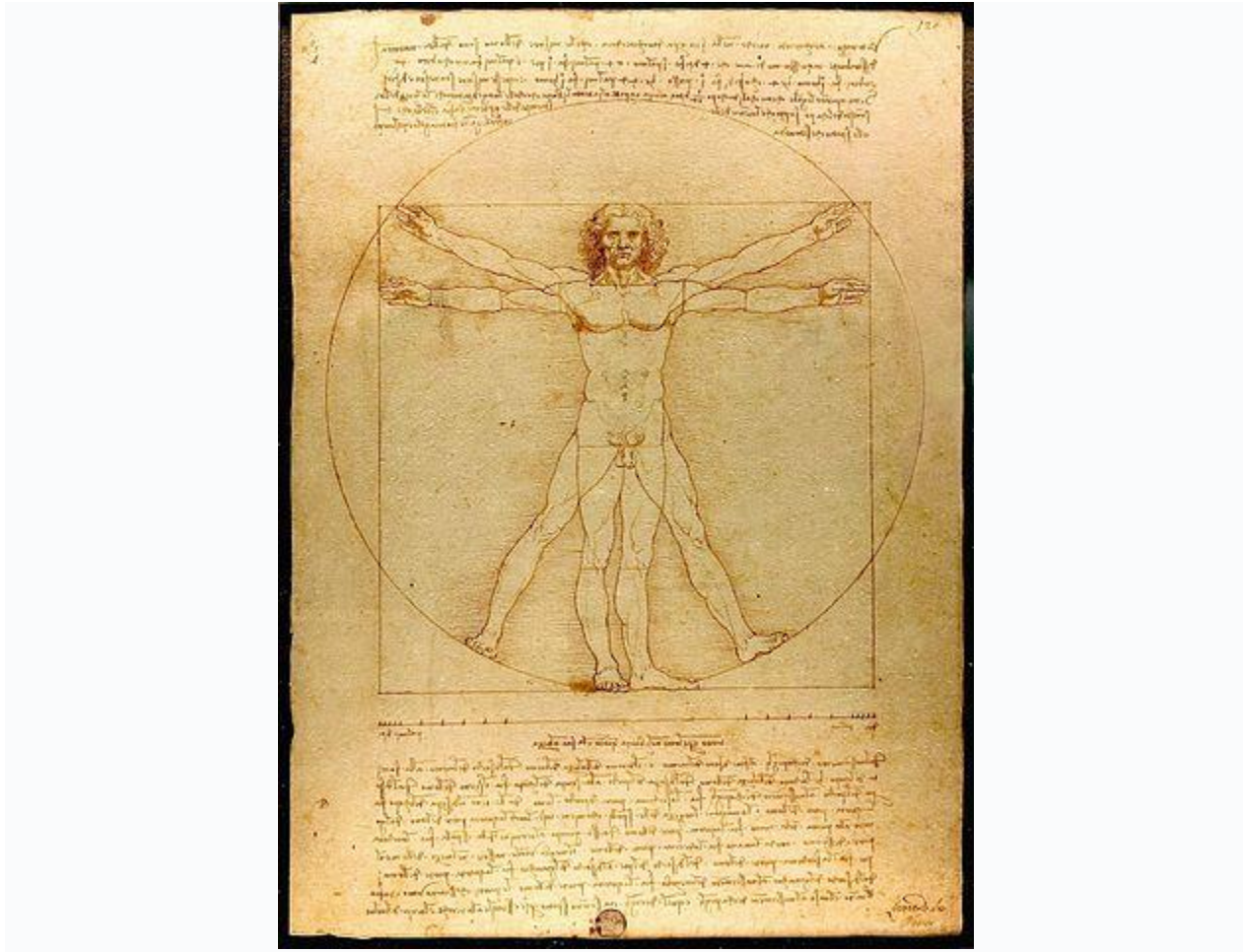


Photo of Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man by Luc Viatour / [www.Lucnix.be](http://www.Lucnix.be)

The work of each healthcare department naturally specializes in a different part of the body. To understand general medical records, learning the **medical term** for each of these is vital. Here are some to get you started:

**Abdominal** – Abdomen

**Cranial** – Skull

**Digital** – Fingers and toes

**Femoral** – Thigh

**Gluteal** – Buttock  
**Inguinal** – Groin  
**Lumbar** – Loin  
**Mammary** – Breast  
**Nasal** – Nose  
**Pectoral** – Chest  
**Thoracic** – Chest  
**Ventral** – Stomach

## **Medical Dictionary Descriptions**

Descriptions for what is happening to patients in both diagnosis and general conversation are the same across the board. Learn the meanings and you'll progress much faster.

Here are some common descriptive words when talking about patients and circumstance:

**Abatement:** A reduction in severity of symptoms.

**Abiotic:** Not related to living organisms.

**Abortive:** Cutting short the course of a disease.

**Abrasion:** Friction wearing away of the top layer of skin.

**Abruption:** A sudden breaking away or breaking off.

**Accessory:** Extra or supplementary to the main element.

**Ambulatory:** Ability to walk.

**Analgesia:** Loss of pain where pain would normally be evident without loss of consciousness.

**Benign:** An abnormal growth that is not life-threatening.

**Cavity:** Hollow space in the body containing one organ or more.

**Compression:** To apply pressure to stop bleeding or prevent further injury.

**Etiology:** The cause of a certain condition.

**Exacerbation:** **Deterioration** of a condition.

**Hematemesis:** Blood in vomit.

**Iatrogenic:** A condition that appears as a result of treatment of another condition.

**Idiopathic:** Of unknown cause.

**Intractable:** Difficult to cure or alleviate.

**Referred pain:** Pain that is felt in another area to the original source of this pain.

**Reflux:** Going in a backward direction.

**Remission:** Disappearance of signs of disease.

**Stimulus:** Elicits a physiological response.

**Subcutaneous:** Just beneath the skin

**Syndrome:** A set of symptoms that indicate towards a certain condition, disease or abnormality.