
A CLASSICAL REFERENCE FOR MODERN STUDY

MEDICAL LATIN

A Comprehensive Glossary of Latin Terminology Used in Medicine

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This glossary is intended for educational purposes only, to support learning and general interest in medical terminology. Please do not use it as a basis for medical decisions, diagnosis, or treatment.

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1. Introduction: Word Formation in Medical Latin

Medical terms are usually built from Latin or Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes (e.g. **gastr-itis** = stomach + inflammation). Nouns follow Latin declension patterns; the most practically relevant forms are the nominative and genitive singular/plural, since the genitive frequently appears within compound terms (e.g. *Musculus biceps brachii* - "of the arm").

Basic Grammatical Terms

Nominativus	the naming form, base form of a noun (e.g. cor - the heart)
Genitivus	genitive case, "of the ..."; common in compound terms (e.g. cordis - of the heart)
Singularis	singular
Pluralis	plural
Dexter, dextra, dextrum	right, right-sided
Sinister, sinistra, sinistrum	left, left-sided
Major, majus	greater, larger
Minor, minus	lesser, smaller
Externus, -a, -um	outer, external
Internus, -a, -um	inner, internal
Communis, -e	common, shared
Proprius, -a, -um	proper, specific

2. Positional and Directional Terms

Basic Anatomical Directions

Anterior / ventralis	toward the front, situated toward the belly
Posterior / dorsalis	toward the back, situated toward the spine
Superior / cranialis	situated above, toward the head
Inferior / caudalis	situated below, toward the tail/feet
Medialis	situated toward the midline
Lateralis	situated to the side, away from the midline
Medianus	situated exactly on the midline
Proximalis	closer to the trunk or point of origin

Distalis	farther from the trunk or point of origin
Superficialis	situated near the surface
Profundus	situated deep
Palmaris / volaris	toward the palm of the hand
Plantaris	toward the sole of the foot
Dorsalis (limb)	toward the back of the hand or foot
Ulnaris	toward the ulna (forearm bone)
Radialis	toward the radius (forearm bone)
Tibialis	toward the tibia (shin bone)
Fibularis / peroneus	toward the fibula (calf bone)
Centralis	situated toward the center
Periphericus	situated at the edge, outer region
Apicalis	situated toward the apex (tip)
Basalis	situated toward the base
Transversus	running crosswise
Longitudinalis	running lengthwise
Obliquus	running at an angle, oblique

3. Anatomical Planes and Movements

Body Planes and Movements

Planum sagittale	sagittal plane, longitudinal division front to back
Planum frontale (coronale)	frontal (coronal) plane, divides body into front/back
Planum transversale (horizontale)	transverse plane, divides body into upper/lower
Flexio	flexion, bending
Extensio	extension, straightening
Abductio	abduction, movement away from the body axis
Adductio	adduction, movement toward the body axis
Rotatio	rotation

Pronatio	pronation, turning the palm downward
Supinatio	supination, turning the palm upward
Elevatio	elevation, raising
Depressio	depression, lowering
Circumductio	circular movement
Inversio	inversion, turning the foot inward
Eversio	eversion, turning the foot outward

4. Descriptive Adjectives: Size, Shape, Color, Texture

Descriptive Adjectives

Magnus, -a, -um	large, big
Parvus, -a, -um	small
Longus, -a, -um	long
Brevis, -e	short
Latus, -a, -um	wide, broad
Angustus, -a, -um	narrow
Altus, -a, -um	high, deep
Rotundus, -a, -um	round
Ovalis, -e	oval
Planus, -a, -um	flat, level
Curvus, -a, -um	curved
Rectus, -a, -um	straight
Ruber, rubra, rubrum	red
Albus, -a, -um	white
Niger, nigra, nigrum	black
Flavus, -a, -um	yellow
Viridis, -e	green
Caeruleus, -a, -um	blue

Durus, -a, -um	hard
Mollis, -e	soft
Solidus, -a, -um	solid
Liquidus, -a, -um	liquid
Siccus, -a, -um	dry
Humidus, -a, -um	moist
Tenuis, -e	thin, fine
Crassus, -a, -um	thick
Simplex	simple
Multiplex	multiple, manifold
Aequalis, -e	equal
Vacuus, -a, -um	empty, hollow

5. Bones and the Skeletal System (Ossa)

Key Bones and Skeletal Parts

Os, ossis (n.)	bone
Cranium	skull
Os frontale	frontal bone
Os parietale	parietal bone
Os temporale	temporal bone
Os occipitale	occipital bone
Os sphenoidale	sphenoid bone
Os ethmoidale	ethmoid bone
Maxilla	upper jaw
Mandibula	lower jaw
Columna vertebralis	spinal column
Vertebra, -ae	vertebra
Vertebrae cervicales	cervical vertebrae

Vertebrae thoracicae	thoracic vertebrae
Vertebrae lumbales	lumbar vertebrae
Os sacrum	sacrum
Os coccygis	coccyx, tailbone
Costa, -ae	rib
Sternum	breastbone
Clavicula	collarbone
Scapula	shoulder blade
Humerus	upper arm bone
Radius	forearm bone (thumb side)
Ulna	forearm bone (little-finger side)
Carpus	wrist
Metacarpus	the bones of the palm
Phalanx, -angis	bone of a finger or toe
Pelvis, -is	pelvis
Os coxae	hip bone
Femur, femoris	thigh bone
Patella	kneecap
Tibia	shin bone
Fibula	calf bone
Tarsus	ankle bones
Metatarsus	the bones of the foot
Calcaneus	heel bone
Medulla ossium	bone marrow
Periosteum	membrane covering the bone
Cartilago, -inis	cartilage

6. Joints, Ligaments, Muscles (Articulationes, Ligamenta, Musculi)

Musculoskeletal System

Articulatio, -onis	joint
Ligamentum, -i	ligament
Tendo, -inis	tendon
Musculus, -i	muscle
Musculus biceps brachii	two-headed muscle of the upper arm
Musculus triceps brachii	three-headed muscle of the upper arm
Musculus quadriceps femoris	four-headed muscle of the thigh
Musculus deltoideus	deltoid muscle (shoulder)
Musculus trapezius	trapezius muscle
Musculus gluteus maximus	largest muscle of the buttock
Musculus sternocleidomastoideus	neck-rotating muscle
Diaphragma, -atis	diaphragm
Fascia, -ae	connective-tissue sheath around muscle
Bursa synovialis	synovial (fluid-filled) sac
Capsula articularis	joint capsule
Meniscus, -i	cartilage disc (of the knee)
Synovia	joint fluid
Aponeurosis, -is	flat tendinous sheet

7. Head, Neck and Sensory Organs

Head, Neck and Sensory Organs

Caput, capitis	head
Cervix, -icis	neck
Facies, -ei	face
Oculus, -i	eye
Cornea	the clear front layer of the eye

Sclera	the white of the eye
Iris, -idis	the colored part of the eye
Pupilla	pupil
Retina	light-sensing layer of the eye
Conjunctiva	membrane covering the front of the eye
Lens, lentis	lens of the eye
Palpebra, -ae	eyelid
Auris, -is	ear
Auris externa	outer ear
Auris media	middle ear
Auris interna	inner ear
Tympanum	eardrum (or middle-ear cavity)
Cochlea	spiral hearing organ of the inner ear
Nasus, -i	nose
Cavum nasi	nasal cavity
Sinus paranasales	paranasal sinuses
Os, oris (n.)	mouth
Cavum oris	oral cavity
Lingua, -ae	tongue
Dens, dentis	tooth
Gingiva, -ae	gum
Palatum, -i	palate
Labium, -i	lip
Pharynx, -yngis	throat
Larynx, -yngis	voice box
Glandula thyroidea	thyroid gland
Glandula parathyroidea	parathyroid gland
Encephalon	brain
Cerebrum	the large brain (cerebrum)

Cerebellum

the small brain (cerebellum)

8. Cardiovascular System (Systema Cardiovasculare)

Heart and Vessels

Cor, cordis

heart

Atrium cordis

atrium of the heart

Ventriculus cordis

ventricle of the heart

Myocardium

heart muscle layer

Endocardium

inner lining of the heart

Pericardium

sac surrounding the heart

Valva, -ae

valve

Valva mitralis

mitral valve

Valva tricuspidalis

tricuspid valve

Valva aortae

aortic valve

Arteria, -ae

artery

Aorta, -ae

the main artery of the body

Vena, -ae

vein

Vena cava

large vein returning blood to the heart

Capillaris, -e

relating to the smallest blood vessels

Pulsus, -us

pulse

Circulatio sanguinis

blood circulation

9. Respiratory System (Systema Respiratorium)

Organs of Respiration

Nasus, -i

nose

Trachea, -ae

windpipe

Bronchus, -i

bronchus, airway branch

Bronchiolus, -i	small airway branch
Pulmo, -onis	lung
Alveolus pulmonis	air sac of the lung
Pleura, -ae	membrane covering the lung
Cavum pleurae	pleural space
Mediastinum, -i	central compartment of the chest
Thorax, -acis	chest
Respiratio, -onis	breathing
Inspiratio, -onis	breathing in
Expiratio, -onis	breathing out

10. Digestive System (Systema Digestorium)

Organs of Digestion

Oesophagus, -i	gullet, food pipe
Gaster / Ventriculus	stomach
Cardia, -ae	opening between esophagus and stomach
Pylorus, -i	outlet of the stomach
Intestinum tenue	small intestine
Duodenum, -i	first part of the small intestine
Jejunum, -i	middle part of the small intestine
Ileum, -i	final part of the small intestine
Intestinum crassum	large intestine
Caecum, -i	first part of the large intestine
Appendix vermiformis	vermiform appendix
Colon, -i	main part of the large intestine
Rectum, -i	final section of the large intestine
Anus, -i	anus
Hepar, hepatis	liver

Vesica biliaris (fellea)	gallbladder
Pancreas, -atis	pancreas
Peritoneum, -i	membrane lining the abdominal cavity
Mesenterium, -i	membrane suspending the intestines
Lien / Splen, -is	spleen

11. Urogenital System (Systema Urogenitale)

Urinary and Reproductive Organs

Ren, renis	kidney
Pelvis renalis	renal pelvis
Ureter, -eris	tube from kidney to bladder
Vesica urinaria	urinary bladder
Urethra, -ae	tube carrying urine out of the body
Testis, -is	testicle
Epididymis, -idis	sperm-storing tube behind the testicle
Scrotum, -i	pouch containing the testicles
Prostata, -ae	prostate gland
Penis, -is	penis
Ovarium, -i	ovary
Tuba uterina	fallopian tube
Uterus, -i	womb
Cervix uteri	neck of the womb
Vagina, -ae	vagina
Vulva, -ae	external female genitalia
Placenta, -ae	placenta
Mamma, -ae	breast, mammary gland

12. Nervous System (Systema Nervosum)

Nervous System

Nervus, -i	nerve
Medulla spinalis	spinal cord
Neuron, -i	nerve cell
Ganglion, -i	cluster of nerve cell bodies
Plexus, -us	network of nerves
Meninges, -um	membranes covering brain and spinal cord
Dura mater	tough outer membrane of the brain
Arachnoidea mater	middle, web-like membrane of the brain
Pia mater	delicate inner membrane of the brain
Cortex cerebri	outer layer of the cerebrum
Truncus encephali	brainstem
Medulla oblongata	lower part of the brainstem
Thalamus, -i	relay center of the brain
Hypothalamus, -i	region below the thalamus
Hypophysis, -is	pituitary gland
Liquor cerebrospinalis	cerebrospinal fluid

13. Skin and Appendages (Integumentum Commune)

Skin, Hair, Nails

Cutis, -is	skin
Epidermis, -idis	outer layer of the skin
Dermis, -idis	inner layer of the skin
Subcutis / Hypodermis	layer beneath the skin
Pilus, -i	hair
Unguis, -is	nail
Glandula sudorifera	sweat gland
Glandula sebacea	oil-producing skin gland

14. Blood, Lymph, Glands

Blood and Lymphatic System

Sanguis, -inis	blood
Erythrocytus, -i	red blood cell
Leucocythus, -i	white blood cell
Thrombocythus, -i	platelet
Plasma, -atis	blood plasma
Lympha, -ae	lymph, tissue fluid
Nodus lymphaticus	lymph node
Glandula, -ae	gland
Glandula suprarenalis	adrenal gland
Thymus, -i	thymus gland

15. Common Prefixes in Medical Terminology

Prefixes (Latin & Greek)

a-, an-	without, absence of (e.g. anemia)
ab-	away from (e.g. abduction)
ad-	toward (e.g. adduction)
ante-	before, in front of (e.g. antelexion)
bi-	two, double (e.g. bilateral)
brady-	slow (e.g. bradycardia)
circum-	around (e.g. circumscribed)
contra-	against, opposite (e.g. contralateral)
dys-	difficult, abnormal (e.g. dysfunction)
endo-	inside, within (e.g. endoscopic)
epi-	upon, above (e.g. epidermis)

hyper-	excessive, above normal (e.g. hypertension)
hypo-	deficient, below normal (e.g. hypotension)
infra-	below (e.g. infraclavicular)
inter-	between (e.g. intercostal)
intra-	within (e.g. intramuscular)
macro-	large (e.g. macrocyte)
micro-	small (e.g. microcyte)
mono-	one, single (e.g. monoparesis)
multi-	many (e.g. multiple)
neo-	new (e.g. neoplasm)
para-	beside, alongside (e.g. paravertebral)
peri-	around (e.g. pericardium)
poly-	many (e.g. polyuria)
post-	after (e.g. postoperative)
prae- / pre-	before (e.g. preoperative)
retro-	behind (e.g. retroperitoneal)
sub-	under (e.g. subcutaneous)
supra-	above (e.g. suprarenal)
tachy-	fast (e.g. tachycardia)
trans-	across, through (e.g. transdermal)
uni-	one, single (e.g. unilateral)

16. Common Suffixes in Medical Terminology

Suffixes (Latin & Greek)

-algia	pain (e.g. neuralgia)
-ectomy	surgical removal (e.g. appendectomy)
-emia	condition of the blood (e.g. anemia)
-genesis	formation, origin (e.g. pathogenesis)

-gramma	a recording (e.g. electrocardiogram)
-graphia	imaging procedure (e.g. angiography)
-iasis	diseased condition (e.g. cholelithiasis)
-itis	inflammation (e.g. gastritis)
-logia	study of (e.g. cardiology)
-lysis	breakdown, dissolution (e.g. hemolysis)
-malacia	softening (e.g. osteomalacia)
-megalia	enlargement (e.g. cardiomegaly)
-oma	tumor, mass (e.g. carcinoma)
-opathia	disease in general (e.g. neuropathy)
-osis	abnormal, usually chronic condition (e.g. arthrosis)
-pathia	suffering, disease (e.g. myopathy)
-penia	deficiency (e.g. leukopenia)
-pexia	surgical fixation (e.g. nephropexy)
-plastia	surgical reshaping (e.g. rhinoplasty)
-plegia	paralysis (e.g. hemiplegia)
-ptosis	drooping, downward displacement (e.g. nephroptosis)
-rrhagia	excessive discharge or bleeding (e.g. hemorrhage)
-rrhaphia	surgical suturing (e.g. herniorrhaphy)
-rrhoea	flow, discharge (e.g. diarrhea)
-scopia	visual examination (e.g. endoscopy)
-stenosis	narrowing (e.g. aortic stenosis)
-stomia	surgical creation of an opening (e.g. tracheostomy)
-tomia	surgical incision (e.g. laparotomy)
-trophia	nourishment, growth (e.g. atrophy)
-uria	condition of the urine (e.g. hematuria)

17. Pathology: Inflammation, Disease, Change

General Disease Terms

Morbus, -i	disease
Inflammatio, -onis	inflammation
Infectio, -onis	infection
Degeneratio, -onis	degeneration, deterioration
Necrosis, -is	tissue death
Atrophia, -ae	wasting of tissue
Hypertrophia, -ae	enlargement of tissue
Hyperplasia, -ae	increase in cell number
Dysplasia, -ae	abnormal tissue development
Metaplasia, -ae	transformation of tissue type
Oedema, -atis	fluid accumulation, swelling
Ischaemia, -ae	insufficient blood supply
Infarctus, -us	tissue death due to loss of blood supply
Thrombosis, -is	formation of a blood clot
Embolia, -ae	vessel blockage by traveling material
Sclerosis, -is	hardening of tissue
Stenosis, -is	narrowing
Dilatatio, -onis	widening
Ruptura, -ae	tear, rupture
Fractura, -ae	bone fracture
Luxatio, -onis	dislocation
Contusio, -onis	bruise
Distorsio, -onis	sprain
Ulcus, -eris	ulcer
Abscessus, -us	encapsulated collection of pus
Fistula, -ae	abnormal passage between organs or to the surface
Hernia, -ae	protrusion of an organ through a body wall

Prolapsus, -us	downward displacement of an organ
Insufficiencia, -ae	inadequate organ function
Paralysis, -is	complete loss of movement
Paresis, -is	partial loss of movement, weakness
Anomalia, -ae	deviation from the norm
Malformatio, -onis	birth defect, malformation
Sepsis, -is	blood poisoning
Intoxicatio, -onis	poisoning

18. Tumor and Oncology Terms

Terms of Neoplasia

Tumor, -oris	swelling, growth
Neoplasma, -atis	new abnormal tissue growth
Carcinoma, -atis	malignant tumor of epithelial origin
Sarcoma, -atis	malignant tumor of connective tissue
Adenoma, -atis	benign glandular tumor
Lipoma, -atis	benign fatty tumor
Fibroma, -atis	benign connective-tissue tumor
Melanoma, -atis	malignant tumor of pigment cells
Lymphoma, -atis	malignant tumor of lymphatic tissue
Leukaemia, -ae	malignant disease of white blood cells
Metastasis, -is	secondary tumor spread from a primary site
Malignus, -a, -um	malignant
Benignus, -a, -um	benign
Recidivum, -i	relapse, recurrence
Remissio, -onis	reduction in disease signs

19. Injury, Trauma and Emergency Medicine

Trauma and Emergency Terms

Trauma, -atis	injury
Vulnus, -eris	wound
Cicatrix, -icis	scar
Combustio, -onis	burn
Congelatio, -onis	frostbite
Haemorrhagia, -ae	bleeding
Haematoma, -atis	bruise, blood collection
Asphyxia, -ae	suffocation, cessation of breathing
Syncope, -es	brief loss of consciousness
Collapsus, -us	circulatory collapse
Shock / Vulnus traumaticum	state of shock
Exitus letalis	death (fatal outcome)
Mors, mortis	death
Reanimatio, -onis	resuscitation

20. Important Verbs in Medical Latin

Common Verbs

Sanare	to heal
Curare	to treat, to care for
Vulnerare	to wound
Palpare	to palpate, to feel with the hands
Percutere	to tap for examination (percussion)
Auscultare	to listen with a stethoscope
Incidere	to cut into
Excidere	to cut out
Resecare	to cut away, to remove
Suturare	to stitch, to suture

Ligare	to tie off
Perforare	to perforate, to pierce through
Dilatare	to widen
Contrahere	to contract
Secernere	to secrete
Inflammare	to inflame
Degenerare	to degenerate
Regenerare	to regenerate
Nutrire	to nourish
Respirare	to breathe
Circulare	to circulate
Infigere	to insert, to fix in place

21. Numbers, Ordinals and Quantities

Numerals

Unus, -a, -um / primus	one / first
Duo, duae, duo / secundus	two / second
Tres, tria / tertius	three / third
Quattuor / quartus	four / fourth
Quinque / quintus	five / fifth
Sex / sextus	six / sixth
Septem / septimus	seven / seventh
Octo / octavus	eight / eighth
Novem / nonus	nine / ninth
Decem / decimus	ten / tenth
Semi-	half (e.g. semiflexion)
Totus, -a, -um	whole
Pars, partis	part

Dimidius, -a, -um	half
Omnis, -e	every, all
Nullus, -a, -um	none

22. Time-related Terms (acute, chronic, congenital ...)

Terms Describing Disease Course

Acutus, -a, -um	acute, sudden onset
Chronicus, -a, -um	chronic, long-lasting
Subacutus, -a, -um	subacute, moderately rapid onset
Congenitus, -a, -um	present from birth
Acquisitus, -a, -um	acquired, not inborn
Hereditarius, -a, -um	hereditary, inherited
Idiopathicus, -a, -um	of unknown cause
Recurrent	recurring
Persistens	persisting
Progredivens	progressive
Latens	hidden, without symptoms
Praesens	present, currently occurring
Praecox	premature, early
Tardus, -a, -um	delayed, late

23. Prescription Latin and Pharmacy Abbreviations

These abbreviations originate from Latin instructions and are still used today on prescriptions and in clinical documentation.

Common Abbreviations

Rp. (Recipe)	"Take!" - the opening word of a prescription
D.S. (Detur, signetur)	"let it be given, let it be labeled"
M.f. (Misce fiat)	"mix so that a ... is made"

p.o. (per os)	by mouth, taken orally
i.v. (intravenosus)	into a vein (intravenous)
i.m. (intramuscularis)	into a muscle (intramuscular)
s.c. (subcutaneus)	under the skin (subcutaneous)
a.c. (ante cibum)	before meals
p.c. (post cibum)	after meals
1-0-1	morning - noon - evening (dosing schedule)
t.i.d. (ter in die)	three times a day
b.i.d. (bis in die)	twice a day
q.d. (quaque die)	every day
q.h. (quaque hora)	every hour
gtt. (guttae)	drops
tabl. (tabuletta)	tablet
ung. (unguentum)	ointment
sol. (solutio)	solution
supp. (suppositorium)	suppository
aq. dest. (aqua destillata)	distilled water
N.N. (nomen nescio)	name unknown
p.r.n. (pro re nata)	as needed
stat. (statim)	immediately
ad us. int./ext. (ad usum internum/externum)	for internal/external use

24. Latin Phrases and Mnemonic Sayings in Medicine

Classic Expressions

Primum non nocere	First, do no harm
In dubio pro reo / pro vita	when in doubt, favor the accused / favor life
Vita brevis, ars longa	Life is short, the art (of healing) is long
Mens sana in corpore sano	A healthy mind in a healthy body

Ex juvantibus	diagnosing retrospectively from treatment response
Per continuitatem	by continuous spread
Per exclusionem	by exclusion (diagnosis)
Post mortem	after death
Ad hoc	for this specific purpose
Ad libitum	as desired, freely
In vivo	within a living organism
In vitro	in a test tube, outside a living organism
Per se	by itself, intrinsically
Status quo	the existing state of affairs
Sine qua non	an essential, indispensable condition

Note: This glossary is intentionally broad and practice-oriented, but does not claim to be exhaustive in the sense of a complete dictionary. For further detail on individual specialties, a dedicated anatomical or clinical dictionary is recommended (see Sources and References).

25. Sources and References

This glossary was compiled and structured for educational reference purposes, drawing on standard, widely recognized medical and anatomical terminology. Readers seeking authoritative detail or wishing to verify individual entries are encouraged to consult the following standard references:

1. Federative Committee on Anatomical Terminology (FCAT). *Terminologia Anatomica: International Anatomical Terminology*. Thieme, Stuttgart/New York.
2. *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*. Elsevier, Philadelphia.
3. *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Wolters Kluwer, Philadelphia.
4. Pschyrembel, W. *Pschyrembel Klinisches Wörterbuch*. De Gruyter, Berlin.
5. *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*. F.A. Davis Company, Philadelphia.
6. Federative International Programme for Anatomical Terminology (FIPAT), International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA) - official anatomical and histological terminology resources.
7. Agnes Arber & classical Latin grammar references, for general Latin declension and grammatical conventions applied to anatomical nomenclature.
8. World Health Organization (WHO), International Classification of Diseases (ICD) - for standardized disease and diagnostic terminology.
9. United States Pharmacopeia (USP) and standard pharmacy reference guides - for prescription ("Sig") abbreviations and dosing terminology.

This document is an original compilation by the author and is intended for educational and reference use. It is not a substitute for a full medical dictionary or professional anatomical nomenclature standard.