

RUHANI COLLEGE

Registered Massage Therapy Program

Course: RU RMT 01 — Health Care Terminology

Quiz 1 Student Handout — Foundations of Medical Terminology

This guide prepares you for Quiz 1, which covers the foundations of medical terminology: the origins of the language, how medical words are built from roots, combining vowels, prefixes, and suffixes, and the skills of word building, defining terms, forming plurals, and interpreting common abbreviations. Each topic explains the material and closes with review questions. Model answers are provided in the Answer Key at the end.

How to Use This Guide

- Study one topic at a time; read the explanation, then cover the page and recall the key terms.
- Treat the word-part lists as vocabulary. Say each part aloud, give its meaning, and use it in a term.
- Use the review questions to test recall, then verify with the Answer Key.
- **Focus your revision on:** the four word parts, the common prefixes and suffixes, combining forms, plural rules, and abbreviations.

Topic 1 — Building Blocks of Medical Terms

Medical terminology is the shared professional language of health care. Once you understand how terms are constructed, you can read and interpret words you have never seen before by breaking them into their parts.

Why Medical Terminology Matters

A common, precise vocabulary lets health-care professionals communicate quickly, accurately, and safely. It reduces misunderstanding, supports clear documentation, and protects clients by ensuring everyone means the same thing by the same word. For a massage therapist it matters when reading referrals, writing clinical notes, and communicating with other regulated professionals.

Origins of the Language

Most medical terms are derived from Greek and Latin. Greek word parts often describe diseases, conditions, and procedures, while Latin parts often describe anatomy. You do not need to know which language a part comes from — recognizing that the vocabulary is built from a fixed set of recurring parts is what makes it learnable.

The Structure of a Medical Term

Almost every medical term is assembled from up to four kinds of building blocks:

- **Word root** — the foundation of the term; it usually names the body part or system and carries the primary meaning (cardi = heart, oste = bone, derm = skin).
- **Combining vowel** — a vowel, most often “o”, that links a root to another root or to a suffix so the term is easier to pronounce.
- **Combining form** — a word root plus its combining vowel, written as root/o (cardi/o, gastr/o, neur/o).
- **Prefix** — added to the beginning of a term to modify its meaning, often location, number, time, or degree (hyper-, sub-, peri-).
- **Suffix** — added to the end of a term, usually indicating a condition, procedure, or specialty (-itis, -logy, -ectomy).

How to Read and Build a Term

To interpret a term, work from the end to the beginning: read the suffix first, then the prefix, then the root(s). For example, “pericarditis” reads as inflammation (-itis) around (peri-) the heart (cardi).

Combining-vowel rule: keep the combining vowel between two roots and when the suffix begins with a consonant; drop it when the suffix begins with a vowel (“carditis”, not “cardioitis”).

Common Prefixes

hyper-	excessive, above normal
hypo-	below normal, under, deficient
sub-	below, under
peri-	around, surrounding



brady-	slow
tachy-	fast, rapid
dys-	difficult, painful, abnormal

Common Suffixes

-itis	inflammation
-logy	study of
-logist	one who studies / specialist
-pathy	disease
-ectomy	surgical removal / excision
-algia	pain
-megaly	enlargement
-scopy	process of viewing / examination
-rrhea	flow or discharge

Common Roots and Combining Forms

cardi/o	heart	oste/o	bone
derm/o	skin	arthr/o	joint
nephr/o	kidney	my/o	muscle
gastr/o	stomach	neur/o	nerve
enter/o	intestine	hepat/o	liver
pulmon/o	lung	cyst/o	bladder, sac
myel/o	marrow / spinal cord	dermat/o	skin

Building and Defining Terms

Analyze built terms into parts and meaning. For example: gastroenterology = gastr/o (stomach) + enter/o (intestine) + -logy (study of); osteomyelitis = oste/o (bone) + myel (marrow) + -itis (inflammation); cardiopulmonary = cardi/o (heart) + pulmon/o (lung) + -ary (pertaining to).

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. From which two languages is most medical terminology derived, and why does that make it learnable?
2. Name the four types of word parts and describe what each contributes to a term.
3. What is the main part or stem of a medical word called?
4. What is the purpose of the combining vowel, and which vowel is most common?
5. State the rule for keeping versus dropping the combining vowel.
6. In what order do you read a term to interpret it? Demonstrate with one example.

- 7.Explain the difference between a prefix and a suffix.
- 8.Give the meaning of each prefix: hyper-, hypo-, sub-, peri-, brady-, tachy-, dys-.
- 9.Give the meaning of each suffix: -itis, -logy, -logist, -pathy, -ectomy, -algia, -megaly, -scopy, -rrhea.
- 10.Identify the body part named by each combining form: cardi/o, oste/o, nephr/o, gastr/o, enter/o, neur/o, hepat/o, arthr/o, cyst/o, pulmon/o, derm/o.

Topic 2 — Word Building and Defining Terms

Word building applies the rules from Topic 1: combine the correct parts, use a combining vowel where needed, and drop it before a vowel suffix. Defining a term is the reverse — separate it into parts and give the meaning of each.

Building Terms from Parts

- hypo + derm/o + ic = hypodermic (pertaining to under the skin).
- gastr/o + enter/o + logy = gastroenterology (study of the stomach and intestines).
- oste/o + myel + itis = osteomyelitis (inflammation of bone and marrow).
- peri + cardi + itis = pericarditis (inflammation around the heart).
- cyst + itis = cystitis (inflammation of the bladder).

Defining Terms

To define a term, name each part and combine the meanings. Practise reading the suffix first, then working back through the term.

Gastroenterology	gastr/o + enter/o + -logy: study of the stomach and intestines
Arthritis	arthr/o + -itis: inflammation of a joint
Cardiopulmonary	cardi/o + pulmon/o + -ary: pertaining to the heart and lungs
Hepatomegaly	hepat/o + -megaly: enlargement of the liver
Dermatology	dermat/o + -logy: study of the skin

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. Build the term: hypo + derm/o + ic.
2. Build the term: gastr/o + enter/o + logy.
3. Build the term: oste/o + myel + itis.
4. Build the term: peri + cardi + itis.
5. Build the term: cyst + itis.
6. Break down and define: Cardiopulmonary.
7. Break down and define: Hepatomegaly.
8. Break down and define: Dermatology.
9. What does the term hypodermic mean, and how do its parts create that meaning?

Topic 3 — Plurals and Medical Abbreviations

Because medical terms come from Greek and Latin, many follow non-English pluralization rules. Learn the patterns rather than each word separately.

-a → -ae	vertebra → vertebrae
-us → -i	nucleus → nuclei
-um → -a	ovum → ova
-ix / -ex → -ices	appendix → appendices
-y → -ies	biopsy → biopsies
-is → -es	diagnosis → diagnoses

Common Medical Abbreviations

Abbreviations save time in charting but must be standard and understood by everyone who reads the record. Use only approved abbreviations.

CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation	ICU	intensive care unit
BP	blood pressure	CXR	chest X-ray
ECG	electrocardiogram	HTN	hypertension

Review Questions

Answer each from memory, then check the Answer Key at the end of this guide.

1. Give the plural of vertebra, nucleus, ovum, appendix, and biopsy, and state the rule behind each.
2. Why do many medical terms follow non-English plural rules?
3. Write the full meaning of: CPR, BP, ECG, ICU, CXR, HTN.
4. Why must charting abbreviations be approved and commonly understood rather than personal?
5. In two or three sentences, explain why accurate medical terminology is important in health care.

Answer Key — Review Questions

Model answers for the review questions in each topic. Use these to check your understanding; where a question asks for explanation, your wording may differ so long as the meaning is correct.

Topic 1 — Building Blocks of Medical Terms

1. Greek and Latin. Greek parts often name diseases, conditions, and procedures; Latin parts often name anatomy. Because terms are built from a fixed, recurring set of parts, they can be decoded rather than memorized one by one.
2. Word root (foundation; usually the body part/system and the primary meaning), combining vowel (usually “o”; links parts for easier pronunciation), prefix (added to the beginning; modifies meaning such as location, number, time, or degree), and suffix (added to the end; usually a condition, procedure, or specialty). A combining form is a root plus its combining vowel.
3. The word root (root).
4. It links a root to another root or to a suffix so the term is easier to pronounce. The most common combining vowel is “o”.
5. Keep it between two roots and when the suffix begins with a consonant; drop it when the suffix begins with a vowel (for example, carditis, not cardioitis).
6. Read the suffix first, then the prefix, then the root(s). Example: pericarditis = -itis (inflammation) + peri- (around) + cardi (heart) = inflammation around the heart.
7. A prefix is attached at the beginning and modifies meaning (often location, number, time, or degree); a suffix is attached at the end and usually indicates a condition, procedure, or specialty. (A suffix is never placed at the beginning of a word.)
8. hyper- = excessive/above normal; hypo- = below normal/under/deficient; sub- = below/under; peri- = around/surrounding; brady- = slow; tachy- = fast/rapid; dys- = difficult/painful/abnormal.
9. -itis = inflammation; -logy = study of; -logist = one who studies/specialist; -pathy = disease; -ectomy = surgical removal/excision; -algia = pain; -megaly = enlargement; -scopy = process of viewing/examination; -rrhea = flow or discharge.
10. cardi/o = heart; oste/o = bone; nephro/o = kidney; gastr/o = stomach; enter/o = intestine; neur/o = nerve; hepat/o = liver; arthr/o = joint; cyst/o = bladder/sac; pulmon/o = lung; dermat/o (dermat/o) = skin. (Note: nephro/o is the kidney, not the liver.)

Topic 2 — Word Building and Defining Terms

1. hypodermic — pertaining to under (below) the skin.
2. gastroenterology — the study of the stomach and intestines.
3. osteomyelitis — inflammation of bone and bone marrow.
4. pericarditis — inflammation of the tissue around the heart.
5. cystitis — inflammation of the bladder.

6. cardi/o (heart) + pulmon/o (lung) + -ary (pertaining to): pertaining to the heart and lungs.

7. hepat/o (liver) + -megaly (enlargement): enlargement of the liver.

8. dermat/o (skin) + -logy (study of): the study of the skin.

9. Pertaining to under the skin: hypo- (under/below) + derm/o (skin) + -ic (pertaining to).

Topic 3 — Plurals and Medical Abbreviations

1. vertebra → vertebrae (-a → -ae); nucleus → nuclei (-us → -i); ovum → ova (-um → -a); appendix → appendices (-ix/-ex → -ices); biopsy → biopsies (-y → -ies).

2. Because they are derived from Greek and Latin, which have their own pluralization patterns; learning the patterns lets you form plurals you have not memorized individually.

3. CPR = cardiopulmonary resuscitation; BP = blood pressure; ECG = electrocardiogram; ICU = intensive care unit; CXR = chest X-ray; HTN = hypertension.

4. So that any authorized reader interprets them the same way; personal or invented abbreviations create confusion and risk errors in care.

5. It allows professionals to communicate quickly, accurately, and safely, and it reduces misunderstanding among the care team. Precise terminology supports clear documentation and protects clients by ensuring everyone means the same thing by the same word.