

contusion

analgesia

neonatal

new born

bruise

pain relief

# Unravelling Medical Jargon

Published by Write Limited  
Level 9, 342 Lambton Quay  
PO Box 5938  
Lambton Quay  
Wellington 6145  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 04 384 6447  
Email: [enquiries@write.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@write.co.nz)  
[www.write.co.nz](http://www.write.co.nz)



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# Writing health information that is easy to read

Do you write health information? If so, you can help your readers understand health information by using plain English. Use our list of plain English alternatives to explain or replace the medical terms and concepts you need to use.

Don't assume your readers understand what medical words and phrases mean. Readers need a complex set of skills to understand, think about, and use the health information they read. People who study literacy use the phrase 'health literacy' to describe these skills.

## Using medical terms in a document

Sometimes you may need to use a medical term. If you don't want to replace it with a one-for-one alternative, you can explain the term at the beginning, or define it and continue to use it. We encourage using definitions and glossaries to help the reader understand the meaning the first time they read a word or phrase.

The booklet lists the medical terms in alphabetical order.

### Bonus sections:

- Prefixes, roots, and suffixes: the 'combining parts' of medical words
- The language of sports medicine and physical therapy
- What some common abbreviations and acronyms mean

At the end of the booklet is a section on the 'combining parts' of medical words that come from Latin and Greek — the beginnings of medical terminology. 'Combining parts' are the prefixes, roots, and suffixes or the first, middle, and last parts of medical words. When you understand how the parts combine, you will be able to explain the word clearly to your reader.

We also include a list of common abbreviations and acronyms and a section on the language of sports medicine. Personal trainers at the gym and sports shoe clinics use many of these words in their conversations with customers.

Print out this booklet and keep it next to your computer for easy reference, or use 'search' or 'find' if you prefer to use the booklet onscreen.

And if the word or phrase you want isn't here, or you have one to contribute, email [consulting@write.co.nz](mailto:consulting@write.co.nz).



# Plain English alternatives for medical words

## A

### medical or health term

### plain English alternative or explanation

abdomen	stomach; stomach area; belly; tummy
abrasion	cut; scratch
acute	starts suddenly; quick; short-term; emergency
adherence	taking medicines as prescribed; taking the right dose at the right time
adverse event	something bad that happens, such as a bad reaction
aetiology (US etiology)	cause of a disease
aggravate	make worse
aggressive (of an illness)	gets worse quickly; changes quickly
ailment	illness; sickness; health problem
allergen	irritant; a trigger that causes hayfever (for example, pollen that causes an immune system reaction such as a rash or sneezing)
alopecia	hair loss; losing your hair
ameliorate	improve; get better
amnesia	loss of memory
anaemia (US anemia)	low iron level in the blood (causing tiredness and shortness of breath)
analgesia	pain relief

anaphylaxis/anaphylactic shock	extreme allergic reaction (can stop the heart beating or cause swelling that blocks the airways)
aneurysm	stretched part of a blood vessel
angina	chest pain (with lack of blood and therefore lack of oxygen to the heart)
anorexia	loss of appetite
anorexia nervosa	eating disorder causing weight loss
antacid	medicine to neutralise stomach acid; medicine to relieve heartburn and indigestion
antenatal	before birth
antibiotic	drug to fight bacterial infection
antibodies	cells that fight infection
anticoagulant	medicine to prevent blood clotting; a blood thinner
antihistamine	medicine to reduce the effect of an allergic reaction
anti-inflammatory	medicine to reduce swelling; anything that reduces swelling or inflammation
arthritis	inflamed joints (with pain, swelling, and stiffness)
asphyxiate	choke; smother; suffocate
asymptomatic	sick but not showing signs or symptoms
atherosclerosis, arteriosclerosis	hardening of the arteries; clogged blood vessels; a buildup of plaque in the arteries
attended his GP	consulted his General Practitioner(doctor)
autoimmune disease	disease where the body's immune system attacks its own tissue(s)

**B**

bacteria	germs; harmful organisms
benign	not harmful; not serious; not cancer; not dangerous
bilateral	on both sides
blister packs	pre-formed packs for tablets
bradycardia	slowed heart rate
breakthrough infection	infection that occurs even when a person has been vaccinated against the disease
bursitis	swollen, painful sac between tendon and bone (for example, shoulder joint)
by means of	by; through; using

**C**

cannula	small tube into a vein (to give drug or fluids intravenously or to take repeated blood samples)
carcinogen	something that may cause cancer
carcinogenic	cancer causing or cancer producing
cardiac arrest	sudden stopping of the heartbeat
cardiovascular	heart and blood vessels
caries	tooth decay
cartilage	tough elastic tissue (in the ear, nose, throat, and joints)
catheter	tube (in a body cavity such as the bladder, or a vein or artery)
[has a] causal association	causes or leads to a reaction
cease	stop; end; quit
cerebral	in the brain
cervical	in the cervix or the neck

cervical spine	the spine at neck level
cervix	lower part ('neck') of uterus
cholesterol	a type of fat essential for the body
chronic	long-term; long-lasting; recurring
clinical	in a medical setting; involving patients
co-morbidities	two or more significant illnesses at the same time (for example, diabetes and a stroke); co-existing medical conditions
cognitive	thinking
cognitive impairment or dysfunction	poor brain function; brain fog; loss of the ability to think, concentrate, problem solve, reason, and remember (usually as a result of disease or injury)
commode	a toilet chair
communicable	can spread; can be caught by others
complementary medicine(s)	alternative practices used with conventional medicine
complex regional pain syndrome	pain in a part of the body, caused by a nervous system disorder
compliance	doing what you are meant to; following treatment or advice
conception	start of pregnancy; the joining of egg and sperm to start a new life
concussion	'knocked out'; a common head injury
congenital	condition you are born with; from birth
conjunctivitis	eye infection with itching and redness
constipation	straining; unable to empty the bowel

contagious (of a disease)	can spread to others; can be caught by others through physical contact
continence	control of the bladder or bowel
contraception	preventing pregnancy; using a pill or something to prevent pregnancy
contraceptive	something to prevent pregnancy
contraindication	symptom or condition that makes a treatment or procedure inadvisable; a reason for not doing something
contusion	bruise

## D

dementia	loss of brain function; loss of the ability to think, remember, problem solve, and make decisions; having a problem thinking
dermatitis, eczema	itchy, red, flaky skin irritation
deteriorate	get worse
diagnosis	identifying a problem, naming a disease or injury
diarrhoea	loose or watery bowel motions
disability	loss of physical or mental function
disorder	problem affecting the body or mind
diuretic	medicine to increase urine output
drug interaction	medicines reacting to each other (the reaction may or may not be helpful)
dysfunction	problem
dyspepsia	indigestion; heartburn

## E

ECG (in US, EKG)	test of heart's electrical signals
eczema, dermatitis	itchy, red, flaky skin irritation
effusion	buildup of fluid; swelling (fluid that collects in tissue or between organs)
electrolytes	type of necessary salt in the blood (for example, sodium and potassium)
embolism	blockage or obstruction of a blood vessel, usually a vein, by a blood clot
embolus or thrombus	blood clot
emergency contraceptive pill (ECP)	morning after pill
emesis	vomiting
emphysema	chronic lung disease (with shortness of breath and wheezing)
empirical evidence	beliefs; evidence or data based on observations and experience
endemic	naturally and consistently present in a region or place (for example, chickenpox is endemic in the United Kingdom)
enuresis	bedwetting
epidemic	spread of a disease or infection (to a lot of people in a short time)
excessive	too much; more than normal
expired medicines	out-of-date medicines; medicines that are past their use-by date

## F

factor	something that contributes to health status
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febrile	feverish; having a high temperature
flatulence, flatus	wind; farting; gas in the bowel
fracture	break (usually of a bone)

## G

gastric	stomach
generic (of medicines)	medicine sold without a brand name — for example, Panadol is the brand name and paracetamol the generic name (note initial capital letter for the brand name, lower case for the generic name)
gestation period	the time between conception and birth; the length of a pregnancy
green prescription	referral with exercise and lifestyle goals from a doctor or nurse to a patient; health professional's advice to a patient to use a physical activity to manage their health

## H

haematuria	blood in the urine
haemorrhoids	piles; swollen veins in or around the anus
health literacy	a person's ability to use health information to make decisions about their own or their family's health
health professional	a person with a scope of practice working in health; a person who has completed a course of study in a health field
health status	current state of health of a person or community
hemiplegia	paralysis on one side of the body
hepatic	liver

hives	rash; red, itchy lumps on the skin
hospital acquired infection	infection caught during a stay in hospital
HPV (human papillomavirus)	virus that can cause cervical cancer
hyper-	high (on its own 'hyper' describes an overactive person, usually a child)
hyperglycaemia	high blood sugar
hyperlipidaemia	high cholesterol
hypermetropia (or hyperopia)	far-sightedness
hypertension	raised blood pressure
hypo-	low (on its own a 'hypo' is a diabetic's experience of having low blood sugar)
hypoglycaemia	low blood sugar that can cause coma in diabetics
hypotension	low blood pressure
hypothermia	abnormally low body temperature
hysterectomy	removal of the uterus (womb)

## I

impairment	restriction caused by an injury or disability; limitation on activity
inactive vaccine	vaccine using germs that have been killed
incision	surgical cut to perform any operation
incontinence	leakage of urine; leakage of bowel motion; unable to control the bladder or bowel
incubation period	period between infection, and signs and symptoms of a disease (how long a disease is in your body before you feel ill)
indication	a valid reason for using a treatment

infection	harm caused by germs (of a virus, bacteria, parasite, or fungus, or other organism that gets into your body and causes harm)
inflammation	pain, heat, redness, and swelling (due to injury or infection)
ingestion	eating; drinking; swallowing
inhaler	device used to breathe in medicine (to ease asthma or other condition affecting breathing)
injury	damage; harm
intake	what you eat and drink; what goes into your body
intermittent	off and on, from time to time
intervention	something done to improve health or alter the course of a disease
intravenous/IV	putting drugs or fluids directly into your blood through a vein
ischaemia	lack of blood (and therefore low oxygen) to a part of the body

## J

jaundice	yellow staining of the skin and whites of the eye (caused by poor liver function or a blocked bile duct)
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## L

laceration	cut; tear
left lateral, right lateral	on the left side or on the right side
lesion	injury; wound; an area of damage (on the skin or other part of the body)

ligament	strong band of tissue holding bones together (to form a joint)
live vaccine	vaccine using a weakened form of a virus
long-term condition	any ongoing, long-term or recurring condition that can have a significant impact on a person's life
lower respiratory tract infection (LRTI)	pneumonia
lumbar	lower back
lumbar spine	spine at waist level

## M

malignant	cancerous
mechanical back pain	back pain, not from disease or injury
medical error	failure to provide required standard of medical care; inappropriate care
medical misadventure (since 1 July 2005, called treatment injury in ACC legislation)	harm resulting from medical error or mishap
medical mishap	occurs when a patient had the right treatment, but they had a complication that was rare and severe; a rare adverse result of treatment
medical practitioner	doctor
medication	medicine; treatment with medicine
misdiagnosis	incorrect diagnosis; a wrong assessment of a patient's condition
mobility	ability to move, do work or exercise

a monitor	a machine that shows blood pressure, pulse and respiratory rate (and any other necessary recordings)
to monitor	to keep an eye on; to observe someone's health, condition over time
morbidity	illness; disease; incidence of disease
morning-after pill	emergency contraceptive pill (ECP)
mortality rate	number of deaths
MRSA (methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus)	bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics
multidisciplinary team	group of health care workers from different fields, each providing specific services to the patient; various health professionals working together
multiple trauma	many injured people from one accident or incident; many injuries in one person
musculo-skeletal	related to muscles and bones, including joints, tendons, and ligaments
myocardial infarction (MI)	heart attack
myopia	short-sightedness

## N

narcotic	addictive medicine; medicine that reduces pain, changes mood and behaviour, and may cause sleep
nebuliser	machine that turns liquid asthma medicine into a mist for breathing in
neonatal	newborn

nephrology	medical specialty related to kidneys
neurological	related to the brain and nervous system
nocturia	waking at night to pass urine
nosocomial infection	infection caught during a stay in hospital; hospital-acquired infection
nuclear medicine	field of medicine that uses radioactive materials to diagnose a problem or treat a person
nutrient	chemicals essential for life (proteins, carbohydrates, fats and oils, minerals, vitamins, and water)
nutrition	the food we eat; what nourishes us

## O

obese	overweight; carrying 20 percent or more extra body fat
observations (obs)	vital signs; measurements of body function (generally blood pressure, heart rate, temperature and breathing rate, and other recordings as required)
occupational therapy	therapy to re-learn everyday activities; therapy to increase independence
oedema (in US, edema)	swelling; retaining fluid; fluid retention
oncology	study and treatment of cancer
oral	by mouth; to do with the mouth
osteoporosis	porous bones; weakened bones with an increased risk of a break
otitis media	middle ear infection

**P**

palsy	paralysis of one muscle or limb
panacea	cure-all; remedy for all diseases or difficulties
pandemic	outbreak of a disease that affects many people in many countries; an epidemic over a wide geographical area affecting a large proportion of the population
paraplegia	the loss of feeling and use of the lower half of the body
parenteral (as in total parenteral nutrition or TPN)	bypassing the usual process of digesting food; feeding a person intravenously because there is a problem in the digestive system
passive immunity	disease protection from mother or vaccine
patella	kneecap
pathology	mechanism of injury or disease; the study of disease processes
pericarditis	inflammation of the heart; swelling of tissue around the heart
perinatal death	death of a baby before or shortly after birth; stillborn baby (between 20th week of pregnancy and four weeks after birth)
peritoneum	inner lining of the abdomen
pharmacokinetics	the science of how medicines move in the body
photophobia	sensitivity to light
plaque	waxy build up of cholesterol and other fats on the inner surface of blood vessels
platelet	blood-clotting cell
pleurisy	inflamed lining of the ribcage; inflamed membrane that surrounds the lungs

pneumonia	lung infection
polypharmacy	taking many medicines
postnatal	about the baby — the period after birth up to about six weeks
postpartum	about the mother — the period after birth up to about six weeks
potent (of medicines)	strong; powerful
precaution	something you do to avoid harm; a preventive measure
prognosis	likely course and outcome of an illness; likelihood of recovery from a disease; prediction of the chance of recovery
prolapse	condition where organs such as the uterus or womb fall down or slip out of place
prolonged	lasting longer than usual; extended
prone	lying face down
prophylaxis	preventive medicine; health measure taken to prevent illness
prostate	gland in male body that makes sperm
Note: prostrate	facedown; lying flat, face down
prosthesis	artificial body part, for example a man-made leg, eye, or tooth
protocol	rules; code; set way of doing something; set procedure
psoriasis	dry, scaly skin rash
psychiatry	diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders
psychology	study of the human mind, mental state and behaviour
psychosomatic	physical disorder caused by emotional factors; physical symptoms influenced by emotional factors

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)

anxiety after seeing or experiencing a traumatic event

public health

health of a community or population

pulmonary

to do with the lungs

pulse

heart rate

pyrexia

fever; abnormally high temperature

## Q

quadriplegia, tetraplegia

loss of ability to move and feel arms, legs, and trunk (all parts of the body below the injury to the spinal cord)

## R

radiology

X-ray (may also refer to ultrasound scans/CT scans/MRI scans)

referral

recommendation to a specialist; personal recommendation; advice to consult someone

reflux

the flow of acid stomach contents up into the gullet; the cause of heartburn and indigestion

(medicines) regime or regimen

a plan; protocol; or a set way of taking medicines

rehabilitate

restore health and function

a relapse

return of ill health; recurrence of a condition

to relapse

fall back into illness

remission

period of time when a disease is not active

renal

to do with the kidneys

rheumatology

medical specialty dealing with connective tissue (involves soft tissue, the immune system, joints, muscles, and bones)

## S

sacrum	tailbone
scope of practice	how a person describes the work they do; the work a person is licensed to do; a health professional's field of work
sedative	calming medicine; tranquiliser
shock (emotional or psychological)	reaction to a traumatic or sad event
shock (medical)	life-threatening condition when the body does not get enough blood flow (following severe injury or illness)
sign	indicator of a problem (seen by someone else or in a test. See also 'symptom')
soft tissue injury	sprain or strain (of ligaments or tendons)
sphincter	a ring of muscle; a muscular ring
sternum	breastbone
steroid	medicine to reduce swelling
stool	human faeces; bowel motion; bowel movement
subclinical infection	minor illness
succumb	die from an illness; give way to something stronger
supine	lying flat; face up; lying on your back
sustained an injury	was injured
sutures	stitches
symptom	indicator of a problem (experienced by a patient. See also 'sign')
synchronised medicines	a person's medicines are issued so that they run out at the same time
syncope	fainting

systemic

throughout the body

**T**

tachycardia

rapid heart rate

temporal association

when two unrelated things happen at the same time

tendinitis (also tendonitis)

inflamed tendon

tendonosis

condition where old tendon injuries have not healed, causing ongoing pain

teratogenic

may be harmful to a baby in the uterus; may be harmful to the foetus; may cause birth defects

terminal

fatal; final; endstage

tetraplegia, quadriplegia

loss of ability to move and feel arms, legs, and trunk (that is, parts of the body below the area of injury to the spinal cord)

therapeutic

beneficial; healing; promoting recovery

therapy

treatment; programme that promotes recovery

thoracic spine

spine at level of chest cavity or ribs

thrombus or embolus

blood clot

tinnitus

ringing in the ears

titrate

calculate the dose of a medicine to achieve a certain result

topical

applied on the skin

toxic

poisonous

toxicology

study of harmful materials such as poisons

toxin

poison

tranquilliser

sedative; medicine that has a calming effect

triage	sorting injured people by need; sorting victims by priority; quick examination and decision making about the priority of victims (in a disaster)
trigger	something that causes symptoms or a reaction
trimester	period of three months; one of the three stages of pregnancy (first — to 12 weeks; second — to 28 weeks; third — to delivery of the baby)
tumour	lump; abnormal growth of tissue or cells

## U

upper limb	arm
upper respiratory system	nose, throat, and windpipe
urgency	the sudden need to pass the sudden need to go to the toilet; urine
urticaria	hives; itchy skin rash
uterus	womb

## V

vasodilator	a medicine that lowers high blood pressure (by relaxing blood vessels)
vasovagal (attack or syncope)	fainting due to low blood pressure and slow heart rate, often associated with shock
venepuncture/venipuncture	taking a blood sample from a vein
vertigo	dizziness; loss of balance
virulent	strong; dangerous; poisonous; highly infectious; deadly
void	pass urine

W

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Y

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## Prefixes, roots, suffixes

Many words used in healthcare are made up of 'combining parts', a **prefix** at the beginning, a **root** in the middle, and a **suffix** at the end. When you know what these parts mean, you can often work out what the words mean. For example:

<b>prefix</b>	<b>root</b>	<b>suffix</b>
position in the body or problem	part of the body or structure	condition or procedure

For example:

	<b>prefix</b>	<b>root</b>	<b>suffix</b>
pericarditis	peri (around)	card (heart)	itis (inflammation)
hysterectomy		hyster (uterus, womb)	ectomy (removal of)
colonoscopy		colon (bowel)	oscopy (looking into)
hemiarthroplasty	hemi (half)	arthro (joint)	plasty (repair)

**prefixes...** come at the beginning of a word

prefixes	meaning	for example
a-	without	aphasic — unable to speak; asystole — no heartbeat
ab-	away from	abduct the leg — move leg away from midline
ad-	towards, near	adrenal gland — gland near the kidney
ante-	before	antenatal — before birth
anti-	against	antiseptic — against infection
auto-	self	auto-immune disease — body attacks itself
bi-	two	bifocal — lenses with two focal lengths
brady-	slow	bradycardia — slow heartbeat
co-, com-, con-	with, together	co-morbidities, conjoined twins (formerly Siamese)
contra-	against	contraindication — a reason for not doing something
dys-	difficult, bad	dyspepsia — difficult, bad digestion
e-, ec-, ex-	out of, away from	ectopic pregnancy — out of place (in the tube)
endo-	within, inner	endoscopy — looking inside the body
extra-	outside of	extravascular fluid — outside the vascular system
hemi-	half	hemicolectomy — removal of part of the bowel
hetero-	other, different	heterosexual — oriented to the opposite sex
homeo- homo-	similar	homeopathy — therapy, treating like with like

prefixes	meaning	for example
hyper-	high	hypertension — high blood pressure
hypo-	low	hypotension — low blood pressure
in-, im-	in	injection — forcing fluid into
in-, im-	not	immature—not mature
infra-	below, beneath	infracostal—below the ribs
inter-	between	intercostal muscle—between the ribs
intra-	within	intraocular—within the eye
micro-	small	microbe—a tiny organism, for example, a virus
multi-	many	multitrauma—many injuries
neo-	new	neonate—newborn baby
pan-	all	pandemic—a widespread epidemic
peri-	around	periosteum—a fibrous sheath covering the bones
poly-	many	polyclinic—clinic with many specialties
post-	after	postnatal, postoperative
pre-	before	prenatal, preoperative
retro-	at, in the back	retroperitoneal— in the back of the abdomen
sub-	under, below	subcutaneous—under the skin
supra-	above	suprarenal—above the kidneys
tachy-	fast	tachycardia—fast heart rate
trans-	across	transverse colon—part of the bowel that goes across

**roots...** come in the middle of a word

roots	meaning	for example
angio	blood vessel	angiography — recording, imaging blood vessels
arthr	joint	arthritis — inflamed joints
blast	cell	neuroblastoma — tumour in a nerve cell
cardio	heart	cardioversion — procedure to change the heart rhythm
cerebro	brain	cerebro-spinal fluid (CSF) — circulates in spine and brain
chole	bile	cholecystectomy — removal of the gallbladder
cyst	bladder	cystitis — bladder or urinary tract infection
derm	skin	dermatitis — inflamed skin
entero	bowel or gut	gastroenteritis — [infection in the digestive tract, causing
gastro	stomach	cramps, vomiting and diarrhoea]
haem	blood	haematoma — a bruise (blood in the tissues)
hepat	liver	hepatitis A, B, or C — diseases that affect the liver
laryngo	lower throat	laryngoscopy — inspecting the lower part of the throat
myelo	marrow	multiple myeloma — cancer of the bone marrow
myo	muscle	polymyalgia — an illness affecting many muscles
neur	nerve	neurosurgery — surgery on the brain, spine, and nerves
ophthalm	eye	ophthalmologist — a specialist in eye diseases
optic	eye	optometrist — a specialist in eyesight and eyecare

orchid	testis	orchidopexy — fixation of an undescended testis
osteo	bone	osteoporosis — porous, weakened bones
oto	ear	otalgia — earache
paed	child	paediatrician — a specialist in the health of children
partum	birth	postpartum — the six weeks after the birth of a baby
pharmaco	medicines	pharmacist — a specialist in dispensing medicines
pharyngo	upper throat	pharyngoscopy — inspecting the upper part of the throat
pleur	lung surface	pleurisy — infection of the membrane covering the lungs
pulmo	lungs	pulmonary — about the lungs, in the lungs
pneum	lungs	pneumonia — lung infection
psych	mind	psychology — the study of how the mind works
rhino	nose	rhinoplasty — repair of the nose for shape or function
thoraco	ribcage	thoracotomy — surgical opening of the chest
trache	airway	tracheostomy — opening into the airway to aid breathing

**suffixes...** come at the end of a word

suffixes	meaning	for example
-algia	pain, suffer	neuralgia — pain along a nerve path, as in shingles
-ectomy	removal of	cholecystectomy — removal of the gallbladder
-genic	producing	carcinogenic, allergenic — producing cancer or allergy

-gram	a record, writing	mammogram — an X-ray film of breast tissue
-itis	inflammation	cholecystitis — inflamed gallbladder
-oid	in the shape of	thyroid (from the Greek <b>thureos</b> — an oblong shield)
-ologist	a specialist	radiologist — an X-ray specialist
-ology	the study of	radiology — study of imaging for diagnosis and treatment
-oma	tumour	carcinoma — malignant, cancerous tumour
-oscopy	looking at	knee arthroscopy — looking into the knee joint
-osis	formi ng	thrombosis — forming a clot
-ostomy	a new opening	colostomy — a new opening into bowel (to drain wastes)
-otomy	an incision into	thoracotomy — an incision giving access to the chest
-pathy	disease, suffer	neuropathy — a disease/condition affecting the nerves
-pexy	surgical fixation	orchidopexy — fixation of an undescended testis
-phobia	fear of	claustrophobia — fear of enclosed spaces
-plasty	repair of	rhinoplasty — repair of nose, especially shape or function
-plegia	paralysis	hemiplegia — paralysis of one side of the body
-toxic	poisonous	cytotoxic — kills cells, as in cancer treatment

# The language of sports medicine and physical therapy

Word	Meaning
flex	bend
extend	straighten
pronate	turn hand or foot, so that the palm or sole faces downwards
supinate	turn hand or foot, so that the palm or sole faces upwards
medial	near to or towards the centre of the body
lateral	of, at, from, on, or towards the side
midline	an imaginary line down the centre of the body
internal	on the inside
external	on the outside
recumbent	lying down, resting, reclining
subluxation	partial displacement of bones (in a joint, or part of the spine)
dislocation	complete displacement of bones, bones out of place (in a joint)
anterior	at, towards the front
posterior	at, towards the back
ventral	(front) surface of the body
dorsal	(back) surface of the body
proximal	nearer to the centre of the body or point of reference
distal	away from the centre of the body or point of reference
superior	upper, over the top of
inferior	lower, underneath

# What some common abbreviations and acronyms mean

Acronym or abbreviation	Definition
ABCs	airway, breathing, circulation — acronym used in first aid
ADLs	activities of daily living — in ACC or occupational therapy work
Ca	cancer
CHF	congestive heart failure
COAD	chronic obstructive airways disease]
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease ] also called emphysema
CORD	chronic obstructive respiratory disease ]
CPR	cardio-pulmonary resuscitation
CT, CAT scan	computerised (axial) tomography scan
CVA	cerebral vascular accident, stroke
CXR	chest X-ray
DHB	district health board
DVT	deep vein thrombosis — blood clot formed, often in lower leg
Dx	diagnosis
ECG	electrocardiogram
ED	emergency department
ENT/ORL	ear, nose, throat/otorhinolaryngology
EUA	examination under anaesthesia
GA	general anaesthetic (in US, anesthetic)
GP	general practitioner, family doctor

Acronym or abbreviation	Definition
IMI	intramuscular injection
IV	intravenous
LA	local anaesthetic (in US, anesthetic)
MI	myocardial infarction, heart attack
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging
MRSA	methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus
MUA	manipulation under anaesthesia— of broken bones
NBM	nil by mouth, nothing to eat or drink — usually before surgery
od	overdose
ORL/ENT	otorhinolaryngology/ear, nose, throat
OTC	over the counter (medicines)
PE	pulmonary embolus or blood clot in the lung
PMH	past medical history
PR	rectal — as in suppository or examination (in Latin, <b>per rectum</b> )
PV	vaginal (in Latin, <b>per vaginam</b> )
S/E	side effect — usually of medicines
SOB	shortness of breath
stat	immediately — as in taking medicines (in Latin, <b>statim</b> )
TPN	total parenteral nutrition — nutritious solution for tube feeding
URTI	upper respiratory tract infection
UTI	urinary tract infection



