

Defining Medical Words

When defining a medical word, first define the suffix. Second, define the beginning of the word; finally, define the middle of the word. Here is an example using the term *osteoarthritis*.

Oste/o/arthr/itis (2)(3) (1)

1. Define the suffix first: *-itis* means *inflammation*.
2. Define the beginning of the word: *oste/o* means *bone*.
3. Define the middle of the word: *arthr* means *joint*.

Therefore, *oste/o/arthr/itis* is an inflammation of the bone and joint.

As a summary :

- The element that is defined first is the **suffix**.
- The element that is defined next is the **beginning** of the word.
- The middle or rest of the word is defined **last**.

e.g.: Define

- ❖ *gastr/o/enter/itis* using the technique for defining medical words as described above.

inflammation of the stomach and intestine

- ❖ electrocardiogram (ECG)
recording the electrical activity of the heart
- ❖ angioma
tumor of the blood vessel
- ❖ hematemesis
vomiting of blood

Suffixes

| Suffix | meaning |
|---------------------------|--|
| -cele | Protrusion, hernia |
| -cyte | Cell |
| -clast | Break down |
| -blast | deposit new, build up |
| -algia, -dynia | Pain |
| -ectasis, -ectasia | Expansion or dilation |
| -ectomy | Surgical removal |
| -edema | Excessive fluid in intracellular tissues |
| -emesis | Vomiting |
| -emia | Blood |
| -gen, -genic, -genesis | Origin, producing, development |
| -globin | The protein of hemoglobin |
| -gram | Record or writing |
| -graph | Device for graphic or recording |
| -logist, -iatics | Specialty of |
| -logy | Study of |
| -itis | Inflammation |
| -lith | A stone, calculus, calcification |
| -lysis | dissolve or destruction |
| -malacia | Softening |
| -megaly | Enlargement |
| -meter | Device for measuring |
| -metry | Act of measuring, examining, texting |
| -oma | Tumor |
| -osis | Abnormal condition, illness |
| -pathy | Disease |
| -penia | Reduction of size or quantity |
| -pnea | Breath, respiration |
| -phobia | A word meaning "fear", often appearing as a suffix |
| -plasty | surgical repair |
| -poiesis | Producing |
| -rrhage | Flowing |
| -rrhaphy | Suture |

| | |
|------------|---|
| -rrhea | Discharge |
| -sclerosis | Not really a suffix, but a root meaning "hard" that sometimes combines with other roots to indicate a condition of hardness |
| -scope | Device for viewing |
| -sis | Condition |
| -tomy | incision |

e.g.:

❖ **oste/o**: bone **-clast** : break down

oste/o/ clast :*Osteoclasts* break down areas of old or damaged bone, while *osteoblasts* deposit new bone tissue in those areas.

❖ **thromb/o**: blood clot-**lysis** :dissolve or destruction

thromb/o/lysis :dissolve of blood clot.

❖ **Pediatrics** : the medical specialty dealing with children

❖ **Pediatrician** : a specialist in childhood development and disease

Prefixes

A *prefix* is a word element located at the beginning of a word. Substituting one *prefix* for another *prefix* changes the meaning of the word. A *prefix* usually indicates a number, time, position, or negation. Many *prefixes* found in medical terminology also are found in the English language. A *prefix* that stands alone is followed by a hyphen(-).

Most of the prefixes occurring in medical terms are also found in everyday English. e.g. : when we say , "My workday starts at 8 AM"

AM: ante meridiem , **ante-** : before **meridiem** : noon

Categories of prefixes:

Dividing prefixes into functional categories makes them easier to learn.

There are 4 divisions:

- Prefixes of time or speed
- Prefixes of direction
- Prefixes of position
- Prefixes of size or number

| Prefixes of time or speed | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>prefix</i> | <i>Refer to</i> |
| Ante-, pre- | Before |
| Brady- | Slow, abnormally slow rate of speed |
| Neo- | New |
| Post- | After |
| Tachy- | Rapid, abnormally high rate of speed |

| Prefixes of direction | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>prefix</i> | <i>Refer to</i> |
| ab- | Away from, outside of, beyond |
| ad- | Toward, near to |
| contra-, anti- | Opposite to, against |
| dia-, trans- | Across, through |

| Prefixes of position | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>prefix</i> | <i>Refer to</i> |
| Ex-, ec-, ecto-, | outside |
| en- | inside |
| endo-, Intra- | In, within |
| epi- | Upon, subsequent to |
| Extra- | Outside of, in addition to |
| Hyper- | Above, beyond normal |
| Hypo- | Below, below normal |
| Infra- | Below |
| Inter- | Between |

| Prefixes of size or number | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| prefix | Refer to |
| bi- | two |
| macro- | big |
| micro- | small |
| mono- | one |
| Multi- | many |
| quadri- | Four |
| Tri- | Three |
| Uni- | one |

Other prefixes:

Pseudo- : false e.g.: pseudotherapy

Photo- : connected to or produced by light e.g.: photosensitive

e.g.:

- **dia/rrheadia-**: through -rrhea: discharge

Diarrhea is a condition of abnormally frequent discharge of fluid fecal matter from the bowel.

- **macro/cytemacro-** : large-cyte: cell
- **micro/scopemicro-** : small-scope: instrument for examining instrument for examining small objects
- epigastric : upon the stomach
- contralateral : the other side
- abnormal: away from normal
- bradycardia: an abnormally slow heartbeat