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Construction of Medical Terms



Medical Word Elements

Medical terms are built by combining and connecting word parts called elements. Word elements include Prefixes, Word Roots, Combining Vowels and Suffixes.

- **Word Root (WR):** The core of a word. This element provides the term's central meaning. Medical terms may have more than one WR. *Examples: pod = foot; hyster = uterus; febr = fever*
- **Combining Vowel (CV):** Word Roots sometimes need a Combining Vowel to join them to other word elements. The vowel "o" is most commonly used. Vowels "a, e, i, u and y" are also used, but less often. *Examples: pod / o ; hyster / o ; febr / I*
- **Combining Form (CF):** A Word Root and its Combining Vowel together are called a Combining Form. *Examples: pod/o; hyster/o; febr/i*
- **Prefix (P):** Only used at beginning of word. *Examples: anti- = against; intra- = within; brady- = slow*
- **Suffix (S):** Only used at end of the term, to complete the word. The suffix indicates whether the word is a noun or an adjective. The following suffix elements make the term a noun: a, e, ia, is, on, um, us, y. These suffix elements make the term an adjective: ac, ic, al, ar, eal, eous, ous. A suffix ending means pertaining to. *Examples: hysterectomy, (noun); thoracic (adjective).*

Construction of Medical Terms



Rules for Constructing Medical Terms

Element Order: The first part in a medical term's definition is usually the last element in the medical term. The last element of the medical term is usually the first part of the definition. *Example: psychologist = one who (ist), studys (log), mind (psych)*

Combining Elements: In the case of a medical term with multiple Word Roots, when adding another WR, Combining Vowel from the previous WR is usually retained.

Examples: gastr/ o /enter / itis ; leuk / o / cyt / o /penia

Prefix: A Prefix is usually not modified when added to a WR.

Suffix: A Suffix that begins with a consonant is usually preceded by a Combining Vowel. A Suffix that begins with a vowel is usually added directly to the Word Root. Examples: carcin / o / cyte ; crypt / orchid

Analyzing Medical Terms

Slash Marks: Insert between each element of the term.

Identify the Elements: Label each element as a WR, CV, CF, P and S.

Examples: cardi (WR) / o (CV) / log (WR) / ist (S) ; hypo (P) / gloss (WR) / al (s)

Anatomical Positions

Medical Terminology Flashcards

Print 4 slides per page and you will be able to cut and fold the printout to easily make flashcards.

Card 1 - Front

- **duction**
Suffix

movement in relation to midline

Card 2 - Front

supra - or epi -
Prefix

Card 2 - Back

above, higher in position

Card 3 Opposites - Front

1. ab -

2. ad -

Prefixes

Card 3 Opposites - Back

1. away from

2. towards

Card 4 Opposites - Front

1. later / o

2. medi / o

WR	CV
<hr/>	
CF	

Noun: median

Adj: lateral, medial

Card 4 Opposites - Back

1. located away from the midline

2. located toward the midline

Card 5 - Front

dia -
Prefix

Card 5 - Back

through

Card 6 - Front

1. **intra** -

2. **inter** -

3. **extra** -

Prefixes

1. within

2. between

3. outside

Card 7 Opposites - Front

1. proxim / o

2. dist / o

$$\begin{array}{cc} \text{WR} & \text{CV} \\ \hline & \text{CF} \end{array}$$

Adj: proximal, distal

1. closer to the body

2. farther away from the body

Card 8 - Front

anter / o
or

ventr / o
WR CV
—
CF

Noun: anterior

Adj: ventral

front
(of body)

Card 9 - Front

dors / o

or

poster / o

WR

CV

CF

Noun: posterior, dorsum

Adj: dorsal

back
(of body)

Card 10 - *Front*

peri -
Prefix

Card 10 - Back

around

Card 11 - Front

caud / o
WR CV

CF

Adj: caudal

Card 11 - Back

downward

Card 12 - Front

infra -

or

sub -

Prefix

below, under

Card 13 - Front

retr / o
WR CV

CF

backward, behind

Card 14 Opposites - *Front*

1. **pre** -

2. **post** -

Prefixes

Card 14 Opposites - Back

1. before, in front of

2. after, behind

Card 15 - Front

1. ect / o

2. mes / o

3. end / o

WR CV

CF

1. outer layer
2. middle layer
3. inner layer