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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)

Medical Term Potluck

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

pol / y
WR CV

CF

Card 1 - Back

much, many

Card 2 - Front

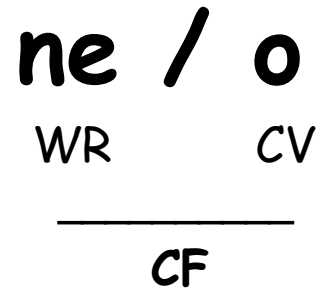
pneum / o
WR CV

CF

Card 2 - Back

air

Card 3 - Front



Card 3 - Back

new

Card 4 - *Front*

anti -
Prefix

Card 4 - Back

against

Card 5 - *Front*

pan -
Prefix

Card 5 - Back

all

Card 6 - Front

- **globin**
Suffix

Card 6 - Back

protein

Card 7 - Front

eti / o
WR CV

CF

Card 7 - Back

cause

Card 8 - Front

gluc / o

or

glyc / o

WR

CV

CF

Noun: glucose

Card 8 - Back

sugar

Card 9 - Front

kinesi / o

WR

CV

CF

Noun: kinesia

Adj: kinesic

Card 9 - Back

movement

Card 10 Opposites - Front

1. micr / o

2. macr / o

WR

CV

CF

Card 10 Opposites - Back

1. small

2. large

Card 11 - Front

log / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: logy

Adj: logic

study of

Card 12 - *Front*

- **ist**
Suffix

Card 12 - Back

one who

Card 13 - Front

gynec / o
WR CV
—
CF

woman, women

Card 14 - Front

dipl / o
WR CV

CF

double, two

Card 15 - Front

olig / o
WR CV

CF

Card 15 - Back

small amount

Card 16 - *Front*

primi -
Prefix

Card 16 - Back

first

Card 17 - Front

hemi -

Prefix

Card 17 - Back

half

Card 18 - Front

gen / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: genesis

Adj: genic

creation of, creating

Card 19 - *Front*

- **gnosis**
Suffix

knowledge

Card 20 - Front

staphyl / o
WR CV

CF

cluster of bacteria

Card 21 - Front

nat/ o
WR CV
—
CF

birth, born

Card 22 - Front

hydr / o
WR CV

CF

Card 22 - Back

water

Card 23 - Front

orth / o
WR CV

CF

Card 23 - Back

straight

Card 24 - Front

cocc / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: *COCCUS*

Adj: *COCCAL*

round bacteria

Card 25 - Front

psych / o
WR CV
—
CF

Card 25 - Back

mind

Card 26 - Front

- **phasia**
Suffix

Card 26 - Back

speech

Card 27 - Front

par / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: para

Adj: parous

Card 27 - Back

to bear

Card 28 - Front

pne / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: pnea

Adj: pneic

breathing, breath

Card 29 - Front

strept / o
WR CV
—
CF

twisted chains

Card 30 - Front

therm / o
WR CV

CF

Noun: thermia

Adj: thermic, thermal

Card 30- *Back*

heat