



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

EMA medical terms simplifier

Plain-language description of medical
terms related to medicines use



EMA Medical Terms Simplifier

Plain-language description of medical terms related to medicines use

This compilation gives plain-language descriptions of medical terms commonly used in information about medicines. Communication specialists at EMA use these descriptions for materials prepared for the public.

In our documents, we often adjust the description wordings to fit the context so that the writing flows smoothly without distorting the meaning. Since the main purpose of these descriptions is to serve our own writing needs, some also include alternative or optional wording to use as needed; we use '<>' for this purpose.

Our list concentrates on side effects and similar terms in summaries of product characteristics and public assessments of medicines but omits terms that are used only rarely. It does not include descriptions of most disease states or those that relate to specialties such as regulation, statistics and complementary medicine or, indeed, broader fields of medicine such as anatomy, microbiology, pathology and physiology.

This resource is continually reviewed and updated internally, and we will publish updates periodically.

If you have comments or suggestions, you may contact us by filling in this [form](#).



A

abdomen

belly

ablation

procedure to burn or remove parts of <tissue> <an organ>

abrasions

grazes

abscess

a swollen area where pus has collected

absence seizure

see seizure, absence

acetylcholine

see neurotransmitter

acetylsalicylic acid

also known as aspirin

acid regurgitation

stomach acid flowing up into the mouth

acneiform

resembling acne

acromegaly

excessive growth particularly of the bones of the hands, feet and face caused by too much growth hormone <from the pituitary gland>

actinic keratoses

<precancerous,> abnormal skin growths caused by too much sunlight

acute

<short-lived> <sudden> <short-term>

acute coronary syndrome

<heart> conditions such as heart attack and unstable angina <(a type of severe chest pain)> <caused by blocked blood supply to parts of the heart>

acute systemic hypersensitivity reaction

see hypersensitivity reaction, acute systemic

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adipocytes fat cells

adjunct add-on

adjuvant (vaccines) a substance <such as aluminium> that increases the effect of the vaccine

advanced (cancer) **Consider** has <started to> spread. **Check definition for each cancer type carefully as this description may not always apply**

aggregate stick together

agonist a substance that attaches to a receptor (target) and triggers an effect

agranulocytosis very low level of a type of white blood cell <called granulocytes><, which are important for fighting off infection>

akathisia a constant urge to move

alcohol intoxication **Do not use: explain in text e.g.** excessive alcohol consumption

alkaloids substances that are naturally found in plants

allergen a substance that causes an allergy

allergen challenge a test to measure a patient's reaction to a defined dose of an allergen (the substance that they are allergic to)

allergic rhinitis **see** rhinitis, allergic

allotransplantation when a patient receives cells, tissues or organs from a donor

alopecia **Substitute with** hair loss

alveolitis, allergic **see** pneumonitis, hypersensitivity

ambulatory able to walk **Avoid term where possible**

amnesia **Substitute with** memory loss

amyloidosis build-up in the body of amyloid, an abnormal protein <which can damage organs>

anaemia <low red blood cell counts> <low levels of haemoglobin> <which can cause tiredness and pale skin>

anaemia, aplastic when bone marrow stops producing new blood cells <causing tiredness, lower ability to fight infection and uncontrolled bleeding>

anaemia, haemolytic excessive breakdown of red blood cells <causing tiredness and pale skin>

anaesthetic a medicine <which blocks sensation> used to prevent pain and discomfort <during surgery and medical procedures>

anaesthetic block **see** nerve block

anaesthetic, general a medicine that can be used to prevent pain by making the patient unconscious

anaesthetic, local a medicine that blocks out sensation used to prevent pain in a part of the body <during surgery or other medical procedure>

anaesthetist a doctor specialised in anaesthesia

analgesic painkiller

analgesic, intraspinal painkilling medicine injected into the spine

anaphylactic reaction (shock) **see** anaphylaxis

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anaphylactoid reaction sudden, severe allergic reaction <with breathing difficulty, swelling, lightheadedness, fast heartbeat, sweating and loss of consciousness>

anaphylaxis sudden, severe allergic reaction <with breathing difficulty, swelling, lightheadedness, fast heartbeat, sweating and loss of consciousness>

aneurysm bulging and weakening of blood vessel <wall>

angina **see** angina pectoris

angina attacks sudden pains to the chest, jaw and back, brought on by physical effort and due to problems with the blood flow to the heart

angina pectoris pains to the chest, jaw and back, brought on by physical effort and due to problems with the blood flow to the heart

angina, unstable chest pain caused by interruptions in the heart's blood supply, that can occur at rest <or without an obvious trigger>

angioedema Rapid swelling under the skin <in areas such as the face, throat, arms and legs> <which can be life threatening if throat swelling blocks the airway>

angiography X-rays of blood vessels

angioplasty a procedure to unblock a narrowed blood vessel <in the heart>

anorexia **Substitute with** loss of appetite

anovulation when ovaries fail to produce eggs

antagonist a substance that blocks a receptor (target) and stops other substances attaching to it and triggering an effect

EXPLAINER

What does antibiotic resistance mean?

Antibiotics fight off bacteria. Typically, they interfere with processes that are important for the bacteria to survive or multiply.

But bacteria can evolve to neutralise the effects of antibiotics. For example, they may develop enzymes that break down the antibiotic or they may develop a mechanism to keep the antibiotic from entering the bacteria. The antibiotic can therefore no longer fight off the bacteria and the bacteria are considered antibiotic resistant.

The instructions for building the proteins (such as enzymes) that make bacteria antibiotic resistant are contained in their genes. Worryingly, these genes can be passed on to other types of bacteria, sometimes to bacteria of different species. This can cause antibiotic resistance to spread quickly even among unrelated species of bacteria.

antibody	a protein in the blood that helps the body's defences by identifying and attaching to specific foreign substances including germs Side effect a protein the body produces that attaches to the medicine <and can affect how well treatment works>
anticoagulant	a substance that prevents the blood from clotting
antiemetic	a substance that <prevents> <and> <treats> nausea and vomiting
antigen	a specific structure that the body can recognise as 'foreign' and against which it can produce an antibody
antihistamine	a <medicine> <substance> that prevents symptoms of allergy Alternatively: an allergy medicine
antihypertensive	blood pressure lowering
antioxidant	a substance that can prevent damage from highly reactive molecules called 'free radicals'
antiplatelet medicines	medicines that prevent platelets in the blood from clumping and blocking arteries
antiretroviral	Use HIV medicine

anuria a condition in which a patient cannot make or pass urine

aortic stenosis **see** stenosis, aortic

apathy lack of interest or energy

aphasia problems with use of language <including speech, understanding and reading>
<because of brain damage>

apheresis a procedure where blood is passed through an external device that removes <X>
before returning the blood to the body

apnoea interruption of breathing. **See also sleep apnoea and obstructive sleep apnoea**

aqueous humour the watery fluid in the eye

arachnoid one of the membranes protecting the spine and the brain

arrhythmia abnormal or irregular heartbeat

artery disease,
peripheral reduced blood flow in arteries of the legs and arms

arthralgia **Substitute with** joint pain

arthritis pain and inflammation in the joints

arthropathy damage to the joints

ascites a build-up of fluid in the abdomen

aspergillosis an infection caused by a fungus called Aspergillus

asthenia **Substitute with** weakness

asymptomatic showing no symptoms <effects>

ataxia inability to co-ordinate muscle movements

atelectasis collapse of the whole or part of a lung

atherosclerosis a disease in which fatty deposits build up in the walls of the arteries
Alternatively: fatty deposits in arteries <which can cause blockage>

atherothrombotic events problems caused by blood clots and hardening of the arteries

atonic seizure **see** seizure, atonic

atony lack of normal muscle <strength> <movement> <function>

atopic linked to an allergy

atopic dermatitis **see** eczema, atopic

atrial fibrillation **see** fibrillation, atrial

atrial flutter **see** flutter, atrial

atrioventricular (AV) block a type of heart rhythm disorder

attenuated weakened

atypical absence seizure **see** seizure, atypical absence

B lymphocytes

use B cells **unless it is necessary to introduce the term lymphocyte, in which case say** B lymphocytes (B cells) **the first time and then use B cells**

bacteraemia

bacteria present in the blood

bacteriostatic

stops bacteria from multiplying

benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)

enlarged prostate gland<that is not cancerous>

bile

a fluid produced in the liver that helps to break down fats

biliary cirrhosis

see cirrhosis, biliary

bilirubin

a breakdown product of red blood cells

bilirubin (elevated)

see hyperbilirubinaemia

EXPLAINER

What does bioequivalence mean?

Bioequivalence testing tells us if medicines that contain the same active substance behave in the same way in the body. Bioequivalence means that the active ingredient in different medicines is absorbed into the body at the same speed and to the same extent.

Testing for bioequivalence typically involves giving volunteers a medicine and then measuring the amount of the active ingredient in their blood regularly (say, every 2 hours) until very little of the ingredient remains in the blood. If the pattern of rise and fall of the active ingredient in the blood is identical then the medicines are bioequivalent.

Three measures are important for confirming bioequivalence:

- The maximum concentration of the active ingredients in the blood
- The time to reach the maximum concentration after taking the medicine
- The extent to which the active ingredients are absorbed.

bioequivalent	two medicines are bioequivalent when they produce the same levels of the active substance in the body. <i>If greater precision is needed consider</i> medicines with the same active substance are bioequivalent if the active substances from both medicines are absorbed in the body at the same rate and to the same extent.
biopsy	examination of tissue removed from the body <to check for disease>
biowaiver	an exemption from having to show bioequivalence between the medicine and its reference product
bipolar disorder	a mental illness causing alternating periods of high mood and depression
blepharitis	inflammation of the eyelid(s)
blood pressure, diastolic	blood pressure when the heart is between beats <(lower one of the two readings)>
blood pressure, systolic	blood pressure when the heart beats <(higher one of the two readings)>
blood urea nitrogen (BUN)	a marker for liver and kidney problems
BMI	body mass index <a measure of body weight in relation to height>
body surface area	<i>Use</i> calculated using the <patient / child>'s height and weight
bolus injection	full dose injected in one go <over a few seconds>
bone (mineral) density	a measure of how strong the bones are
bone marrow	spongy tissue inside the large bones <where blood cells are produced>
bone marrow transplantation	<i>See also</i> haematopoietic (blood) stem cell transplantation. a procedure where the patient's bone marrow is cleared of cells and replaced with healthy bone marrow cells from a donor

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bradycardia slow heart rate

breakthrough pain flare-up of pain despite ongoing treatment with painkillers

bronchi airways in the lungs

bronchiectasis when airways have become weakened and scarred

bronchitis inflammation of the airways in the lungs

bronchoconstriction narrowing of the airways <causing breathing difficulty and wheezing>

bronchodilator a medicine that widens the airways in the lungs

bronchospasm excessive <and prolonged> contraction of the airway muscles causing breathing difficulty

bruxism <involuntary> teeth grinding

bulimia nervosa an eating disorder

bullae(e) large blister(s) with pus

bullous blistered

bullous eruption blisters

C

cachexia muscle wasting with significant weight loss

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calcitonin	a hormone <produced by the thyroid gland> that helps to control the amount of calcium and phosphorus in the blood
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candidiasis	thrush, a fungal infection <caused by Candida>
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capillary leak syndrome	leakage of fluid from blood vessels causing tissue swelling and a drop in blood pressure
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capsid	shell (of a virus)
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carcinoid syndrome	symptoms caused by <cancerous> tumours that release substances into the blood <that act on different organs>
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carcinoid tumour	a tumour of the endocrine system that produces hormones
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carcinoma	a type of cancer
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cardiac	heart
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cardiac arrest	heart stops beating
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cardiac arrhythmia	see arrhythmia
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cardiomyopathy	damage to the heart muscle
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cardiotoxicity	harm to the heart
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cardiovascular	affecting the heart and blood circulation
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cardiovascular system	heart and blood vessels
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cardioversion	a process that restores the heart's normal rhythm
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cartilage	tough, flexible tissue in joints and other areas such as the nose and ears
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catalyse	help
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cataplexy	sudden muscle weakness and collapse caused by a strong emotion or laughter <in patients with narcolepsy>
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cataract	clouding of the lens
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catheter	a flexible tube inserted into the body
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CD4 T-cells	white blood cells that are important in helping to fight infections
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cellulitis	inflammation of the deep skin tissue
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central nervous system	brain and spinal cord
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central venous catheter	see central venous line
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central venous line	a tube through the skin into a large vein <used for giving medicines and fluids>
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cerebral	of <cerebrum, a part of> the brain
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cerebral oedema	see oedema, cerebral
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cerebrospinal fluid	fluid that surrounds the brain and the spinal cord
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cerebrovascular accident	stroke
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cerebrovascular disease	disease of the blood vessels supplying the brain
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cervical cancer cancer of the cervix

cervical dystonia twisting and pulling of the neck and head caused by abnormal tightening of neck muscles

cervix the neck of the womb

CHD **see** coronary heart disease

chelate ***Do not translate but explain in text***, e.g. 'attaches to another chemical to form a 'chelate' that can be removed from the body in the stools'

cholestasis reduced flow of bile from the liver <because of a blockage>

cholestatic hepatitis **see** hepatitis, cholestatic

choroid the layer below the retina that contains blood vessels

chromatopsia changes in colour perception

chromosomal translocation when parts of genes are rearranged between two chromosomes

chromosome genetic material

chronic long term

chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) cancer of a type of white blood cell called lymphocytes

chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML) a cancer of a type of white blood cell called granulocytes

chronic renal failure **see** renal failure, chronic

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chronic stable angina pectoris

see angina pectoris

circumoral

Do not use; substitute with around the mouth

cirrhosis

<scarring of the liver> <a type of liver disease>

cirrhosis, biliary

liver damage caused by build-up of bile

coagulation

clotting

coagulopathy

problems with blood clotting

cognitive

ability to think, learn and remember

colitis

inflammation in the large bowel <causing pain and diarrhoea>

colloidal

solid particles evenly spread in a liquid

colon

lower part of the gut

colonoscopy

a procedure to examine the large bowel through a tube with a camera

colorectal cancer

a cancer that starts in the large bowel and involves the rectum (the lowest part of the gut)

community-acquired infection

infection has been caught outside of hospital

compensated liver disease

see liver disease, compensated

compliance

the ability of patients to stick to their treatment **Avoid term, explain what is meant**

complicated flu **see** flu, complicated

complicated infection **see** infection, complicated

congenital present at birth

congestive heart failure **see** heart failure, congestive

conjunctiva the membrane that lines the white of the eye and the inside of the eyelid

conjunctivitis redness and discomfort in the eye

connective tissue the tissue that binds and supports the skin and internal organs

constriction narrowing

contrast agent a compound that helps make internal body structures easier to see during imaging and medical procedures

contusion bruising

convulsion fits

cornea the transparent layer in front of the eye that covers the pupil and iris

corneal opacity clouding of the cornea

coronary arteries blood vessels that supply the heart muscle

coronary artery disease **see** coronary heart disease

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coronary heart disease	heart disease caused by narrowing or blockage of blood vessels supplying the heart muscle
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corpora cavernosa	the spongy tissue of the penis
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corpuscular volume	size of the red blood cells
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C-reactive protein	a marker of inflammation
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creatine kinase	an enzyme released into the blood when muscle is damaged
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creatine phosphokinase (CPK)	see creatine kinase
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creatinine	a breakdown product of muscle <removed by the kidneys>
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creatinine (elevated)	a sign of <worsening> kidney problems
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creatinine clearance	a measure of how well the kidneys are working
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crepitation	unusual crackling sound
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Crohn's disease	an inflammatory disease affecting the gut
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cryotherapy	freezing
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crystalluria	<crystal> particles in the urine
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Cushing's syndrome	disorder with signs such as weight gain, fat build-up on the face and bruising caused by too much of <a type of steroid> <corticosteroid> hormone
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cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL)	CTCL is a rare type of lymphoma (cancer of the lymph tissue) where some white blood cells (T-cells) grow in the skin
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cyanosis skin and lips turning blue <because of a lack of oxygen>

cystic fibrosis an inherited disease that affects the glands in the lungs, gut and pancreas that secrete fluids such as mucus and digestive juices

cystinosis a rare disorder where cystine builds up within body cells, preventing them from working correctly

cystitis <inflammation> <infection> in the bladder <which can cause pain and discomfort when passing urine>

cytokine release syndrome <life-threatening> condition causing fever, vomiting, shortness of breath, headache and low blood pressure

cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis a viral infection of the retina, which can cause loss of vision

cytopenia low number of cells in the blood <or tissue>

cytotoxic cell-killing or able to kill <dividing> cells <such as cancer cells>

D

dander shed skin and hair

decompensated heart failure **see** heart failure, decompensated

decompensated liver disease **see** liver disease, decompensated

deep vein thrombosis (DVT) blood clot in a deep vein, usually in the leg

delirium confusion

deltoid muscle muscle covering the shoulder joint

delusion	false beliefs
dementia	loss of intellectual function
demyelinating polyneuropathy	a neurological disorder characterised by progressive weakness and loss of sensation in the legs and arms
demyelination	breakdown of the covering around nerve fibres <which can affect brain activity, muscle control and sensations>
depot injection	a type of injection where the medicine is prepared so that it is absorbed by the body very slowly
dermatitis	inflammation of the skin
dermatitis, atopic	see eczema, atopic
dermatofibrosarcoma protuberans	a type of cancer (sarcoma) in which cells in the tissue beneath the skin divide uncontrollably
dermatology	the treatment of skin conditions
desquamation	shedding of the upper layers of the skin
diabetic foot infection	Consider infection that occurs in the feet of patients with diabetes
diabetic ketoacidosis	a serious complication of diabetes with high levels of ketones in the blood Add relevant symptoms if needed
diabetic peripheral neuropathy	damage to the nerves in the extremities that can occur in patients with diabetes
diabetic precoma	a dangerous condition that can occur in diabetes (Combine with ketoacidosis if necessary)
dialysis	technique for removing unwanted substances and excess fluid from the blood <when the kidneys do not work well enough>

dialysis, peritoneal	type of dialysis <involving circulating fluid into the abdomen and then allowing the fluid to flow out>
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diaphoresis	excessive sweating
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diaphragm	the main breathing muscle under the lungs
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diastolic blood pressure	see blood pressure, diastolic
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digital ulcers	see ulcers, digital
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dilate	Substitute with widen or expand
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diplopia	double vision
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disease-modifying (drugs or therapy)	treatment that changes the progress of a <long-term> disease
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dissociation (psychiatry)	feeling disconnected from emotions and physical surroundings
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distension	swelling
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diuretic	a medicine that increases urine production <and reduces build-up of water in the body> <and lowers blood pressure>
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diverticulitis	a disease affecting the gut
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DNA	genetic material
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dopamine	neurotransmitter Parkinson's disease only : a messenger substance in the parts of the brain that control movement and coordination
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Doppler ultrasound	a diagnostic test that measures the speed of blood flow
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dormant

inactive

DRESS (drug rash with eosinophilia and systemic symptoms)

a severe reaction affecting the skin, blood and internal organs

duodenitis

inflammation of the duodenum, the part of the gut leading out of the stomach

duodenum

the part of the gut leading out of the stomach

dysaesthesia

unpleasant and abnormal feeling when touched

dysarthria

difficulty speaking

dysgeusia

taste disturbance

dyskinesia

difficulty controlling movement

dyslipidaemia

abnormal levels of fat in the blood

dysmenorrhoea

period pains

dyspepsia

indigestion

dysphagia

difficulty swallowing

dysphonia

changes in the sound of the voice

dysplasia

presence of abnormal cells <which may become cancerous>

dyspnoea

difficulty breathing

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dystonia involuntary muscle contractions

E

echocardiography a diagnostic test where an image of the heart is obtained using ultrasound

ectopia lentis a disorder where the lens of the eye is in the wrong position

ectopic pregnancy pregnancy developing outside the womb

eczema itchy, red and dry skin

eczema, atopic itchy, red and dry skin in people prone to allergies

efficacy **Avoid. If absolutely necessary, use** 'how well <medicine> works as measured in clinical studies'

ejection fraction blood pumped out of the heart in one beat

electrocardiogram
(ECG) a test of the heart's <electrical> activity

electrolytes salts such as sodium, potassium, calcium, chloride and bicarbonate <in blood and other fluids in the body>

embolism obstruction of a blood vessel <by a clot>

embolism, air/gas air or gas bubbles in the blood that obstruct a blood vessel

emetogenic triggering nausea and vomiting

emotional lability mood swings

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empirical treatment	treatment started on current knowledge until better information is available
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encephalitis	inflammation of the brain
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encephalopathy	brain disorder caused by a harmful substance or infection
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encephalopathy, hepatic	brain damage caused by liver problems
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encephalopathy, hyperammonaemic	brain damage caused by high levels of ammonia
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endocarditis	infection of the sac around the heart <which can lead to serious heart complications>
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endocrine	related to <glands that produce> hormones in the body <i>In some circumstances, particularly where 'endocrine' is an adjective, using 'hormonal' might be enough</i>
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endometrium	the lining of the womb
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endophthalmitis	inflammation of the inside the eye <often caused by infections>
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endoscope	a thin tube used to look into the body
-----------	--

endoscopy	a procedure that uses a tube with a camera to look inside the body
-----------	--

engraftment	Consider when the cells start growing <and producing normal blood cells>
-------------	---

enzyme	a protein that <explain role of enzyme, e.g. converts X to Y>
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enzyme replacement therapy	therapy in which the patient is provided the enzyme that is lacking
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eosinophil	a type of white blood cell
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eosinophilia	an excess of eosinophils, a type of white blood cell
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epidemic	when a disease spreads to a large number of people in a community, region or country
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epidemiological studies	studies of the causes and distribution of diseases in the population
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epidermis	outer layer of the skin
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epigastralgia	pain around the upper part of the stomach
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epigastric (region)	upper and middle part of the belly
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epiphyses	the growing ends of long bones <which become part of the main bone when growth finishes>
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epistaxis	Substitute with nosebleed
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erectile dysfunction	inability to get or keep an erection; impotence
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erosion	ulcer
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erythema	reddening of the skin
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erythropoietin	hormone that stimulates the production of red blood cells <by the bone marrow>
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exacerbation	flare-up
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exercise capacity	the ability to carry out physical activity
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exfoliative	flaky
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extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO)

a technique to oxygenate the blood outside the body using a device similar to a heart-lung machine

extrapyramidal side effects/symptoms

effects on a part of the brain that regulates movement <which may result in tremor, muscle spasms or movement disorders>

extravasation

when a medicine that is normally injected into a vein leaks or is accidentally injected into the tissue surrounding the vein, where it can cause serious damage

F

faecal urgency

urgent need to open the bowels

familial

runs in the family

familial adenomatous polyposis

formation of numerous growths mainly in the large intestine

familial hypercholesterolaemia

high blood cholesterol levels that run in the family

fatigue

Substitute with tiredness

febrile

feverish

febrile neutropenia

see neutropenia, febrile

fibrillation

uncoordinated twitching of muscle <fibres>

fibrillation, atrial

irregular and uncoordinated contractions of the upper chambers of the heart <caused by problems in the flow of electrical impulses> <which may cause <palpitations> <fast heart beat>>

fibrillation, ventricular

dangerous, irregular and uncoordinated contractions of the lower chambers of the heart <caused by problems in the flow of electrical impulses> <which can stop the heart working>

fibroids

non-cancerous growths in the womb

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fibrosis, pulmonary lung damage with tissue scarring and thickening

ferritin a protein that stores iron in the body

FEV1 (forced expiratory volume in 1 second) the most air a person can breathe out in 1 second

fibrinolytic dissolves blood clots made out of a substance called fibrin

fissure tear or crack

fistula abnormal passageway <between the gut and other organs>

flatulence gas

flu, complicated serious effects of flu generally requiring hospital care

flushing reddening of the skin

flutter, atrial rapid contractions of the upper chambers of the heart <caused by problems in the flow of electrical impulses> <which causes strain on the heart because the upper and lower chambers are beating at different speeds>

follicles small sacs <in the ovary> that hold the eggs

folliculitis inflammation of hair follicles

forced expiratory volume the most air a person can breathe out <in one second>

forced vital capacity a measure of how much air the lungs can hold

formication a sensation of something crawling on or under the skin

FVC **see** forced vital capacity

G

gangrene decay and death of tissue

gastric retention when the stomach does not empty properly

gastritis inflammation of the stomach lining

gastroenteritis diarrhoea and vomiting

gastrointestinal stomach and gut

gastro-oesophageal reflux disease disease where stomach acid goes upwards into the oesophagus

gastro-resistant <tablets> <capsules> that can pass through the stomach intact

gastrostomy inserting a tube through the skin into the stomach (**see also** PEG)

general anaesthetic **see** anaesthetic, general

generalised anxiety disorder long-term anxiety or nervousness about everyday matters

generalised seizure **see** seizure, generalised

EXPLAINER

What are genes?

Our genes determine our makeup and we inherit them from our parents. A gene is a set of precise instructions for making a specific protein in a cell. We have a bank of between 20,000 and 25,000 different genes. Each gene forms a small section of the long strands of DNA (chromosomes), present in the nucleus of the cell.

Cells make copies of the DNA when they divide. The copies can develop mistakes but these are usually repaired and there is no effect on the genes. For many of the remaining mistakes, the consequences are minor and go unnoticed. But, rarely, mistakes lead to an alteration (mutation) of a gene and affect the production of an important protein and so cause disease. Cystic fibrosis, a disease affecting the lungs and the digestive system, is an example of a disease caused by faulty genes.

Genetic diseases are challenging to treat. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms of the disease and, where possible, replacing the missing or abnormal protein resulting from the faulty gene. For some diseases, advanced medicines may be able to introduce genes into body cells and so correct the underlying genetic abnormality, possibly permanently.

genetic engineering artificially altering an organism's genetic makeup

genotoxic substance a substance that is harmful to the DNA, the genetic material in cells

glaucoma damage to the nerve in the eye <usually caused by high pressure in the eye>

glaucoma, angle-closure damage to the nerve in the eye caused by pressure inside the eye rising rapidly because fluid cannot drain out

glaucoma, narrow-angle [see](#) glaucoma, angle-closure

glaucoma, open-angle damage to the nerves in the eye caused by high pressure due to clogging of fluid drainage canals

glioblastoma multiforme a type of aggressive brain tumour

glioma a type of brain tumour that begins in 'glial' cells (the cells that surround and support nerve cells)

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glossodynia	burning or tingling sensation in or around the mouth
-------------	--

glucose	sugar
---------	-------

gluteal region	buttocks
----------------	----------

glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c)	the proportion of haemoglobin in the blood that has glucose attached. HbA1c indicates how well blood glucose is controlled
----------------------------------	--

gout	high levels of uric acid in the blood causing symptoms especially painful inflammation in the joints
------	--

graft versus host disease	when transplanted cells attack the body <because the transplanted tissue or organ regards the patient's tissue as 'foreign' and attacks the body>
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granulation	wound healing
-------------	---------------

granulation, hypertrophic	excessive production of tissue during wound healing
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granulocytes	a type of white blood cell
--------------	----------------------------

Guillain-Barré syndrome	an immune system disorder that causes nerve inflammation <and can result in pain, numbness, muscle weakness and difficulty walking>
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gynaecomastia	abnormal breast enlargement
---------------	-----------------------------

H

5-hydroxytryptamine	also known as serotonin – see neurotransmitter
---------------------	---

haemagglutination	clumping of red blood cells
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haemagglutinins <virus> proteins that make red blood cells clump together

haematological <of> <related to> blood

haematoma a collection of blood under the skin

haematopoietic (blood) stem cell transplantation a procedure where the patient's bone marrow is <cleared of cells and> replaced <by stem cells> <from a donor> <with the patient's own stem cells> to form new bone marrow <that produces healthy cells>

haematopoietic progenitor cells **see** stem cells

EXPLAINER

What is haematopoietic stem cell transplantation?

Haematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) involves a patient receiving stem cells to help the bone marrow produce healthy blood cells. Stem cells are unspecialised cells that can develop to become different types of specialised cells. HSCT is used to treat serious diseases of the blood and immune system. A stem cell transplant in which the patient receives cells from a matched donor is called an allogeneic transplant. Before receiving the transplant, treatment is given to clear cells from the patient's own bone marrow. The patient then receives the donor cells, which multiply and develop into healthy specialised blood and immune cells.

haematuria **Substitute with** blood in the urine

haemodialysis technique for removing waste products from the blood<used in patients with kidney disease> <using a blood filtration machine>

haemoglobin the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen around the body

haemolytic anaemia **see** anaemia, haemolytic

haemophilia A an inherited bleeding disorder caused by lack of factor VIII

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haemophilia B	an inherited bleeding disorder caused by lack of factor IX
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haemoptysis	coughing blood
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haemorrhage	Substitute with bleeding
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haemorrhagic stroke	see stroke, haemorrhagic
---------------------	---------------------------------

haemostasis	stopping bleeding
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hairy cell leukaemia	cancer of a type of white blood cell called B-lymphocytes <The term 'hairy cell' refers to the hair-like projections that can be seen on the surface of the lymphocytes when they are examined under a microscope.>
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hallucination	seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not there
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hand foot syndrome	rash and numbness on the palms and soles
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hay fever	inflammation of the nasal passages caused by an allergy to pollen Do not define unless absolutely necessary
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EXPLAINER

What does HbA1c say about diabetes control?

HbA1c is a substance in the blood, with the full name glycosylated (or glycated) haemoglobin. As blood sugar rises, the amount of glycosylated haemoglobin increases. HbA1c is measured in people with diabetes and tells us about a person's average blood glucose (sugar) control over the previous 2 to 3 months.

HbA1c is measured as a proportion of haemoglobin in the blood, either as a percentage or in 'mmol/mol'. Generally, in people who don't have diabetes the HbA1c is below 6% (42 mmol/mol) and in people with diabetes it is over 6.5% (48 mmol/mol).

Taking diabetes medicines regularly lowers HbA1c levels. HbA1c is often used to measure the effectiveness of diabetes medicines. Because HbA1c tells us about long-term control of blood glucose it may be a better measure than the level of blood glucose itself, which fluctuates and can change within a few minutes of eating or taking a diabetes medicine. The aim of diabetes treatment is to achieve reliable long-term control of blood glucose and prevent complications of the disease.

head and neck squamous cell carcinoma

a type of cancer that starts in the cells lining the mouth, nose, throat or ear

heart failure

when the heart does not pump blood as well as it should <with shortness of breath, tiredness and ankle swelling>

heart failure, congestive

when the heart does not pump blood as well as it should <with build-up of fluid around the heart> <causing shortness of breath, tiredness and ankle swelling>

heart failure, decompensated

when the heart is working less and less well

hepatic

liver

hepatic encephalopathy

[see](#) encephalopathy, hepatic

hepatitis

inflammation of the liver

hepatitis, cholestatic

build-up of bile leading to inflammation of the liver

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hepatomegaly enlarged liver

HER2 a protein involved in the growth of certain types of breast cancer

herpes simplex viral infection of the mouth (such as cold sores) or the genitals

herpes zoster **see** shingles

hirsutism excessive hair <in parts where there is usually very little or no hair>

histamine a substance in the body that causes allergic symptoms

HMG-CoA reductase an enzyme in the liver that is needed to make cholesterol

Hodgkin's lymphoma **see** lymphoma

homocystinuria an inherited disease where the amino acid methionine cannot be broken down completely by the body

hormone a substance <released by a gland> that circulates in the blood and helps body organs to work in specific ways

hyperaemia increased blood flow

hyperaemia, ocular red eye

hyperammonaemia high blood levels of ammonia

hyperammonaemic encephalopathy **see** encephalopathy, hyperammonaemic

hyperbilirubinaemia high blood levels of bilirubin<, a breakdown product of red blood cells, which can cause yellowing of the skin and eyes> <, indicating liver problems>

hypercalcaemia	high blood calcium levels
----------------	---------------------------

hypercalciuria	high calcium levels in the urine
----------------	----------------------------------

hyperchloraemic acidosis	excess acid in the blood caused by too much chloride
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hypercholesteraemia	high blood cholesterol levels
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hypercholesterolaemia, primary	high blood cholesterol levels that have no identifiable cause
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hyperglycaemia	high blood glucose levels
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hyperglycaemic coma	coma caused by too much blood glucose
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hyperhidrosis	excessive sweating
---------------	--------------------

hyperkalaemia	high blood potassium levels <which can cause tiredness, muscle weakness, feeling sick and heart rhythm disturbances>
---------------	--

hyperlactataemia	high blood lactic acid levels
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hyperlipidaemia	high blood levels fat in the blood
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hypernatraemia	high blood sodium levels <which can cause thirst, tiredness, confusion and fits>
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hyperparathyroidism	when the parathyroid glands produce too much parathyroid hormone, which raises calcium levels in the blood <and can lead to bone and muscle pain, dehydration, and fragile bones>
---------------------	---

hyperphosphataemia	high blood phosphate levels
--------------------	-----------------------------

hyperplasia	enlargement of an organ or body tissue <caused by increased cell division>
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hyperprolinaemia	a genetic disorder causing high levels of the amino acid proline in the blood
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hypersensitive	allergic
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hypersensitivity	allergic reactions
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hypersensitivity reaction, acute systemic	allergic reaction with widespread effects such as shortness of breath, skin rashes and low blood pressure
---	---

hypertension	high blood pressure
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hypertension, ocular	raised pressure in the eye
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hypertensive crisis	sudden, dangerously high blood pressure
---------------------	---

hyperthermia	high body temperature
--------------	-----------------------

hyperthyroidism	an overactive thyroid gland <which can cause hyperactivity, sweating, weight loss and thirst>
-----------------	---

hypertonia	muscle tension
------------	----------------

hypertriglyceridaemia	high blood levels of triglycerides, a type of fat
-----------------------	---

hypertrophic granulation	see granulation, hypertrophic
--------------------------	--------------------------------------

hypertrophy	excessive growth or increase in the number or size of cells
-------------	--

hyperuricaemia	high blood levels of uric acid
----------------	--------------------------------

hypervolaemic	when the amount of water in the body is higher than normal
---------------	--

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hypoacusis	hearing loss
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hypoesthesia	reduced sensation to touch, pain and temperature
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hypocalcaemia	low blood calcium levels
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hypoglycaemia	low blood glucose levels
---------------	--------------------------

hypogonadotropic hypogonadism	a rare hormone deficiency disease
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hypokalaemia	low blood potassium levels <which can cause weakness, muscle cramps, tingling and heart rhythm disturbance>
--------------	---

hypomagnesaemia	low blood magnesium levels
-----------------	----------------------------

hypomania	feeling excited and overactive
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hyponatraemia	low blood sodium levels <which can cause headache, tiredness, fits and coma>
---------------	--

hypophosphataemia	low blood levels of phosphates
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hypoplasia	incomplete development of an organ or tissue
------------	--

hypoproteinaemia	low blood protein levels
------------------	--------------------------

hypotension	low blood pressure
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hypotension, orthostatic	see hypotension, postural
--------------------------	----------------------------------

hypotension, postural	feeling dizzy or lightheaded on standing or sitting up because of a drop in blood pressure
-----------------------	--

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hypothalamus a region of the brain

hypothyroidism an underactive thyroid gland <with tiredness, weight gain, and skin and hair changes>

hypotonia reduced muscle strength or tone

hypoxia lack of oxygen in body tissues

I

icterus **see** jaundice

idiopathic the cause of the disease is unknown

idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP) a disease in which people do not have enough platelets and are at high risk of bleeding

ileum (ileal) last part of the small intestine

immediate-release tablet **Only needs definition when comparing with other types of tablet:** a tablet that releases the active substance immediately

immune reactivation syndrome **see** immune reconstitution syndrome

immune reconstitution syndrome when the immune system starts working again leading to inflammation and damage to healthy tissue <such as the liver and thyroid gland>

immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome (IRIS) **see** immune reconstitution syndrome

immune system the body's natural defences

immunity protection

immunity, passive	short-term protection against infection <from injected antibodies><from antibodies passed to a baby from the mother>
immunocompetent person	person with an immune system that works normally
immunocompromised person	person with a weakened immune system
immunodeficiency disorder, primary	when body defences are reduced from birth
immunogenicity	General: the ability to make the immune system respond to the <viruses/bacteria etc.>; Studies: the ability of X to trigger the production of antibodies
immunoglobulins	Antibodies (see antibody) As active substance: blood proteins that have been extracted from donor plasma
immunological response	triggering of the body's defences against <an organism or a foreign substance>
immunomodulator	a substance that changes the activity of the body's defences
immunosuppressant medicine	a medicine that reduces the activity of the immune system
immunosuppressive	reduces the activity of the immune system
immunotherapy	medicines that stimulate the immune system <to kill the cancer cells>
impetigo	a skin infection causing crusting scabs
inactivated (vaccine)	uses organism that <has been killed> <cannot reproduce>
incidence	the number of people who get the <disease/condition/illness> every <year>

incontinence lack of control over passing <urine><stools>

incontinence, urge **see** urinary urgency

induration hardening <at the injection site>

indwelling intravenous cannula a thin tube permanently inserted into a vein

infection, complicated infection that is difficult to treat because it has spread within the body or the patient has other conditions

infection, upper respiratory tract nose and throat infection

influenza flu

infusion drip

insomnia difficulty sleeping (**Consider** difficulty falling and staying asleep, and poor quality of sleep)

insomnia, primary insomnia with no identified cause <including medical, mental or environmental causes>

interstitial lung disease **see** lung disease, interstitial

intra-abdominal infections **Use:** infections within the abdomen (belly)

intracranial within the skull <in or around the brain>

intra-dermal <within><into> the skin

intramuscular into a muscle

intraocular into the eye

intraspinal analgesia **see** analgesic, intraspinal

intrathecal into the spinal canal <into the fluid surrounding the spinal cord>

intravenous<ly> into a vein

intravitreal inserted into the vitreous humour, the jelly-like fluid in the eye

intubation insertion of a breathing tube through the nose or the mouth

intussusception when part of the bowel becomes enfolded within another part of the bowel, leading to a blockage

invasive disease disease <that has spread> <capable of spreading> to other parts of the body

invasive procedure **Avoid if possible; consider** a medical procedure that may involve piercing or cutting into the body or inserting instruments

ions charged particles

iron overload an excess of iron in the body

ischaemia reduced blood supply

ischaemic heart disease **see** coronary heart disease

ischaemic stroke **see** stroke, ischaemic

J

jaundice yellowing of the skin and eyes

K

Kaposi's sarcoma a type of cancer affecting the skin

keratitis inflammation of the cornea

keratoconjunctivitis
sicca dry eyes

keratopathy damage to the cornea, the transparent layer of the eye

ketoacidosis a dangerous condition with high blood levels of ketones <that can make blood more acidic>

L

lacerations cuts

lacrimation watery eyes

lactate dehydrogenase a marker for tissue damage

lactic acidosis a build-up of lactic acid in the body

larynx voice box

laxatives medicines that treat constipation

lean body mass

body weight excluding fat

lesion

Consider injury or abnormality

lethargy

lack of energy

leucocytes

white blood cells

leucocytosis

high levels of white blood cells

leucopenia

low white blood cell counts

leukaemia

cancer of the white blood cells

limb

arm or leg

lipids

fats

lipoatrophy

loss of fat below the skin <that can change body shape>

lipodystrophy
(syndrome)

changes in the distribution of body fat

liver disease,
compensated

when the liver is damaged but is still able to work <adequately>

liver disease,
decompensated

when the liver is damaged and can no longer work adequately

liver impairment

problems with the liver

local anaesthetic

see anaesthetic, local

long QT syndrome	see QT<c> prolongation
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low density lipoprotein (LDL)-cholesterol	'bad' cholesterol
---	-------------------

lower respiratory tract infection	infection of the lungs such as bronchitis or pneumonia
-----------------------------------	--

lumbar puncture	inserting a needle into the lower spine <to test for or treat conditions affecting the spinal cord and brain>
-----------------	---

lumbar vertebra	one of the bones in the lower part of the spine
-----------------	---

lung disease, interstitial	disorders causing scarring in the lungs
----------------------------	---

luteinising hormone (LH)	the hormone that triggers the release of eggs during the menstrual cycle
--------------------------	--

lymphadenopathy	enlarged lymph nodes, or 'swollen glands'
-----------------	---

lymphatic system	Consider a network of vessels that transport fluid from tissues through the lymph nodes and into the bloodstream
------------------	---

lymphoblastic lymphoma (LBL)	a cancer of a type of immature white blood cell called T-lymphoblasts
------------------------------	---

lymphocele	collection of lymph fluid usually in the lower belly
------------	--

lymphocytes	a type of white blood cell
-------------	----------------------------

lymphoma	cancer of lymphocytes, white blood cells involved in the body's defences
----------	--

lymphopenia	low levels of lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell
-------------	---

lysis	cell death
-------	------------

M

macrocytosis enlargement of red blood cells

macula the central part of the retina at the back of the eye

macular oedema **see** oedema, macular

macrophage a type of white blood cell

magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technique for detailed scanning of internal organs <using magnetic fields>

maintenance (dose, treatment) **Consider** <continuing> <ongoing><subsequent>
If only the first dose is different, then no need to describe the rest of the doses as continuing, ongoing, etc

malabsorption poor absorption of nutrients from the digestive system

malaise **Substitute with** feeling generally unwell

malignant cancerous

mania mental disorder with extreme excitement and overactivity

manic episodes periods of extremely high mood

mantle cell lymphoma an aggressive cancer of a type of white blood cell called B-lymphocytes

melanoma a type of skin cancer affecting cells called melanocytes

meningitis	inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord
------------	---

metabolites	breakdown products in the body or the substances that <a food> <a medicine> <a chemical> is broken down into
-------------	---

metastasis	cancer that has spread from another part of the body
------------	--

metastatic	has spread to other parts of the body
------------	---------------------------------------

methaemoglobinaemia	too much of an abnormal haemoglobin that cannot carry oxygen effectively
---------------------	--

mitochondria	the energy-producing components within cells
--------------	--

modified-release	<i>For layered tablets containing two active substances:</i> the two active substances are released at different rates from the tablet <over a few hours> <i>For other modified release preparations, do not give a general definition of modified release but give a description restricted to the medicine.</i>
------------------	--

monoclonal antibody	an antibody (a type of protein) designed to recognise and attach to <named antigen> <a specific target>
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monotherapy	used on its own
-------------	-----------------

mortality	<i>Do not use, but say:</i> death rate
-----------	---

mucosa	<i>see</i> mucous membranes
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mucositis	inflammation of the moist body surfaces
-----------	---

mucositis, oral	inflammation of the lining in the mouth <ranging from soreness and redness to severe ulceration>
-----------------	--

mucous membranes	moist body surfaces, such as the lining of the mouth
------------------	--

mucus	If an explanation is considered necessary, consider a thick bodily fluid for lubrication and protection
multiple myeloma	a cancer of the bone marrow
multiple sclerosis (MS)	a disease of the brain and spinal cord in which inflammation destroys the protective covering around nerves and damages the nerves
multiple sclerosis, primary progressive	gradual start of multiple sclerosis with steady worsening of the disease
multiple sclerosis, relapsing-remitting	when the disease causes multiple sclerosis attacks (relapses) followed by periods with milder symptoms (remission)
multiple sclerosis, secondary progressive	when relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis steadily worsens without any improvement
muscle relaxants	medicines used to relax muscles <including muscles that help the patient to breathe>
muscular atrophy	muscle wasting
musculoskeletal	relating to the muscles and bones
mutated	changed
myalgia	Substitute with muscle pain
myasthenia gravis	a disease, causing muscle weakness
myelin	protective covering of nerves
myeloablative therapy	treatments that destroy the bone marrow
myelodysplastic syndromes	when the bone marrow does not make enough healthy blood cells or platelets

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myeloid of <in> bone marrow

myeloproliferative diseases <a slow-growing cancer with> production of too many blood cells of a particular type <that can cause blockages>

myelosuppression a condition in which the bone marrow cannot make enough blood cells

myocardial infarction heart attack <because of blockage in blood supply to a part of the heart>

myocarditis inflammation of heart muscle

myoclonic seizure **see** seizure, myoclonic

myopathy muscle disease causing weakness

myopia nearsightedness or short-sightedness

myositis ossificans abnormal bone growth in the muscle

N

naevus/nevus <mole> <visible area of skin damage>

naïve patients **Do not use but say:** patients who have not been treated before

nanobody a small antibody

narcolepsy a sleep disorder that causes a person to fall asleep suddenly and unexpectedly

narrow-angle glaucoma **see** glaucoma, angle-closure

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nasal congestion a blocked nose

nasal polyps growths in the lining of the nose

nasogastric tube a tube through the nose to the stomach

nasopharyngitis inflammation of the nose and throat

nausea feeling sick

nebuliser device to produce a mist <of the medicine> for the patient to breathe in <through a mask or mouthpiece>

necrosis death of cells or tissue

neoadjuvant treatment preliminary treatment to shrink the <cancer> <tumour>

neonate newborn baby
Preferably substitute newborn baby ***for*** neonate

neonatologist doctor specialising in treating newborn babies

nephritis kidney inflammation

nephrolithiasis kidney stones

nerve block procedure to block sensation to a part of the body

neuralgia ***Substitute with*** nerve pain

neuralgia, post-herpetic long-lasting nerve burning pain that may occur after shingles

neuroleptic malignant syndrome	a dangerous reaction with fever, rigid muscles, changing blood pressure and coma, usually caused by antipsychotic medicines
neurological	relating to the brain or nerves
neuropathic pain	see pain, neuropathic
neuropathic ulcers	see ulcer, neuropathic
neuropathy	nerve damage
neuropathy, peripheral	nerve damage in arms and legs <causing pain or numbness, burning and tingling>
neuropathy, peripheral motor	nerve damage causing difficulty with movement
neuropathy, sensory	nerve damage affecting sensation of pain, temperature and touch
neuropsychiatric disorders	disorders of the brain and nerves resulting in altered thinking or behaviour
neurosurgery	surgery on the nervous system, including the brain
neurotransmitter	a substance that nerve cells use to communicate with neighbouring cells Also consider a substance that relays signals from a nerve cell to another cell

EXPLAINER

What are neurotransmitters?

Cells, typically nerve cells, communicate by releasing chemicals which attach to a neighbouring cell. These chemicals are called neurotransmitters. There are many different neurotransmitters – some well-known ones include acetylcholine, dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin (also called 5-hydroxytryptamine). If enough of these neurotransmitters reach the neighbouring cell, they provoke an effect on the cell, most often by increasing or decreasing the cell's activity, for example muscle contraction.

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neutropenia low levels of neutrophils, a type of white blood cell <that fights infection>

neutropenia, febrile low white blood cell counts with fever <due to infection>

neutropenic with low levels of neutrophils, a type of white blood cell

neutropenic fever **see** neutropenia, febrile

neutrophil a type of white blood cell <that fights infection>

nocturia need to pass urine at night

nonclinical studies **Use** laboratory studies

non-Hodgkin's
lymphoma **see** lymphoma

nosocomial <infection> <disease> picked up in hospital

O

obesity being very overweight

observational studies studies looking at the effects of medicines as they are used by patients in a real-life setting

obstructive sleep
apnoea (syndrome) repeated interruption of breathing during sleep due to airways becoming blocked

ocular of eye

ocular hyperaemia **see** hyperaemia, ocular

ocular hypertension **see** hypertension, ocular

oedema swelling (**Consider** fluid retention)

oedema, cerebral swelling in the brain

oedema, macular swelling in the macula, the central part of the retina at the back of the eye

oedema, periorbital puffy eyes

oedema, peripheral swelling especially of the ankles and feet <due to fluid retention>

oesophageal <gullet> <foodpipe> <tube that leads from the mouth to the stomach>

oesophageal stenosis **see** stenosis

oesophagitis inflammation of the foodpipe

oesophagus the tube that leads from the mouth to the stomach

oestrogen a female sex hormone

oestrogen-receptor negative tumour where the cancer cells do not have receptors for the hormone oestrogen on their surface

oestrogen-receptor positive where the cancer cells have receptors for the hormone oestrogen on their surface

oligo-ovulatory rarely produces eggs

oliguria low urine output

oncologist cancer specialist

opacity **Substitute with** clouding

open-angle glaucoma **see** glaucoma, open-angle

ophthalmologist eye specialist

opioid a <painkiller><medicine> that is related to morphine

opportunistic infections infections seen in patients with a weakened immune system

optic nerve the nerve that sends signals from the eye to the brain

oral mucositis **see** mucositis, oral

orodispersible that dissolves in the mouth

oropharynx
(oropharyngeal) mouth and throat

orphan medicine a medicine used in rare diseases

orthopaedic relating to the bones

orthostatic on standing or sitting up

orthostatic hypotension **see** hypotension, postural

ossification bone formation

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osteoarthritis swelling and pain in the joints

osteoblasts bone-forming cells

osteoclasts cells that are involved in breaking down the bone tissue

osteomyelitis bone infection

osteonecrosis death of bone tissue

osteopenia reduction in bone strength

osteoporosis a disease that makes bones fragile

otitis media infection of the middle ear

ovalbumin a protein in egg white

ovarian cysts sacs of fluid within the ovaries

ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome when the ovaries over-respond to treatment <causing nausea, weight gain and diarrhoea>

ovarian stimulation fertility treatment where the ovaries are stimulated to release more eggs

ovulation the release of eggs <during the menstrual cycle>

oxygen saturation **Consider** a measure of lung function

P

paediatrician	doctor specialised in the treatment of children
---------------	---

Paget's disease	a disease involving bone destruction and regrowth, which causes deformity
-----------------	---

pain, neuropathic	pain due to nerve damage
-------------------	--------------------------

palliative	relieving symptoms
------------	--------------------

palliative care	treatment of the symptoms of a disease that is not intended to lead to cure
-----------------	---

palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia syndrome	see hand foot syndrome
--	-------------------------------

palpitations	a forceful heartbeat that may be rapid or irregular
--------------	---

palsy	paralysis with weakness and shaking
-------	-------------------------------------

pancreatitis	inflammation of the pancreas <causing severe pain in the belly and back>
--------------	--

pancytopenia	<low blood cell counts> or <low levels of all types of blood cells <including platelets>>
--------------	--

pandemic	when a disease spreads to a large number of people in many countries worldwide
----------	--

papillomaviruses	viruses that cause warts and abnormal tissue growth
------------------	---

paraesthesia	sensations like numbness, tingling, pins and needles
--------------	--

parathyroid glands	glands that secrete the hormone that controls blood calcium levels
--------------------	--

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Parkinson's disease	a progressive brain disease that causes shaking and muscle stiffness and slows movement
parkinsonism	effects similar to Parkinson's disease such as shaking, muscle stiffness and slow movement
paronychia	nail bed infection
partial<-onset> seizure <with <or without> secondary generalisation>	see seizure, partial<-onset> <with <or without> secondary generalisation>
passive immunity	see immunity, passive
patent ductus arteriosus	a condition where the ductus arteriosus (a blood vessel that allows blood to bypass the baby's lungs before birth) fails to close after birth ('patent' means open). This causes heart and lung problems in the baby.
patient-year	the equivalent of one patient taking the medicine for one year
peak expiratory flow	the maximum speed a person can breathe out
Pearl Index	a standard way of measuring the effectiveness of contraceptives, which measures how many unwanted pregnancies occur in 100 user-years
pedal arteries	Avoid: Just write 'arteries that supply blood to the feet'
PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy)	a feeding tube inserted through the skin into the stomach (see also gastrostomy)
pegylated	attached to a chemical called polyethylene glycol
pegylated liposomes	tiny fatty spheres that are coated with < or attached to> a chemical called polyethylene glycol
pelvic	lower abdominal

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pelvic inflammatory disease

a type of infection of the upper part of the female genital tract

peptic ulcer disease

ulcers in the stomach or the duodenum

peptide

a short chain of amino acids

percutaneous coronary intervention

a procedure that unblocks blood vessels of the heart to restore its blood supply

percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy

see PEG

percutaneous transluminal coronary angiography (PTCA)

surgical procedure that is used to unblock narrowed coronary arteries

perennial

occurs throughout the year

performance status

Adapt the following as necessary: a rating of how well a patient is

perfusion

blood circulation <through an organ>

pericardial disease

disease of the membrane around the heart

pericarditis

inflammation of the membrane around the heart

periocular infections

infections around the eyes

periorbital oedema

see oedema, periorbital

peripheral neuropathy

see neuropathy, peripheral

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peripheral arterial disease **see** artery disease, peripheral

peripheral motor neuropathy **see** neuropathy, peripheral motor

peripheral oedema **see** oedema, peripheral

peritoneal cavity abdominal space

peritoneal dialysis **see** dialysis, peritoneal

peritoneum the membrane that forms the lining of the abdominal (belly) cavity

pertussis whooping cough

petechiae tiny blood spots under the skin

phaeochromocytoma a tumour of the adrenal gland

phagocytes specialised 'scavenger' cells of the immune system

pharmacodynamics a medicine's effects in the body

pharmacokinetics how a medicine is absorbed, modified and removed from the body

pharyngitis sore throat

Philadelphia chromosome positive (Ph+) this means that some of the patient's genes have rearranged themselves to form a special chromosome called the Philadelphia chromosome. This chromosome produces an enzyme that leads to the development of leukaemia

phlebitis inflammation of a vein

phlebotomy	removal of some of the blood from the body
------------	--

phosphenes (luminous phenomena)	a temporary brightness in the field of vision
---------------------------------	---

photodynamic therapy	treatment in which a medicine is 'switched on' by <a special type of> light
----------------------	---

photophobia	abnormal sensitivity of the eyes to light
-------------	---

photopsia	flashes of light in the field of vision
-----------	---

photosensitising agent	a medicine 'switched on' by <a special type of> light <and used for photodynamic therapy>
------------------------	---

photosensitivity reactions	sunburn-like reactions (following exposure to light)
----------------------------	--

pigmentation	colouring of the skin, hair and eyes
--------------	--------------------------------------

pituitary gland	a gland <at the base of the brain> that controls many other hormone-producing glands in the body
-----------------	--

placebo	dummy treatment
---------	-----------------

plaque psoriasis	see psoriasis
------------------	----------------------

plasma	the liquid part of the blood or the part of the blood left when the blood cells are removed
--------	--

plasma exchange	a procedure to remove <unwanted> <substances> <antibodies> from plasma (the liquid part of the blood) <by replacing the patient's plasma with plasma from a donor>
-----------------	--

plasmapheresis	see plasma exchange
----------------	----------------------------

plasmin	an enzyme that breaks up clots <and helps restore the normal blood flow to the heart>
---------	---

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platelet aggregation formation of blood clots

platelets components that help the blood to clot

pleural effusion fluid around the lungs

pleuritic pain a type of chest pain

pneumonia infection of the lungs

pneumonitis inflammation in the lungs <causing shortness of breath and cough>

pneumonitis, hypersensitivity inflammation in the lungs due to an allergy <causing shortness of breath and cough>

poliomyelitis **Use:** polio

pollakiuria abnormally frequent urination

polyuria increase in urine production

porphyria an inability to break down chemicals called porphyrins

portal vein vein leading to the liver

posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome brain swelling with <usually temporary effects such as> headache, changes in vision, reduced consciousness and seizures

post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) **see** neuralgia, post-herpetic

postmenopausal women women who have been through the menopause

postpartum after childbirth

postural hypotension **see** hypotension, postural

precancerous lesions abnormal cells that could develop into cancer

preclinical studies **Use** laboratory studies

preprandially **Substitute with** before meals

PRES **see** posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome

preterm **Substitute with** premature

prevalence the number of people with the disease

primary hypercholesterolaemia **see** hypercholesterolaemia, primary

primary immunodeficiency syndrome **see** immunodeficiency disorder, primary

primary insomnia **see** insomnia, primary

proctalgia anal pain

prodrug a medicine that is converted to an active form in the body

progression (disease) getting worse

progression-free survival how long patients live without their disease getting worse

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progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML)

a rare but serious <viral> brain infection <with symptoms similar to those of a multiple sclerosis attack>

prolonged release

the active substance is released slowly <from the tablet> over a few <weeks/days/hours> <after being injected>

prophylaxis

prevention

proteasome

a system within cells that breaks down proteins when they are no longer needed

proteinuria

excess protein in the urine

pruritus

Substitute with itching

psoriasis

<a> <an inflammatory> disease causing red, scaly patches on the skin

psoriatic arthritis

a disease causing inflammation in the joints in combination with psoriasis

psychomotor hyperactivity

restlessness

psychosis

altered sense of reality

pulmonary (arterial) hypertension

high blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs **Consider** (for brevity and if appropriate) high blood pressure in the lungs

pulmonary artery

the blood vessel that leads from the heart to the lungs

pulmonary embolism (PE)

clot in a blood vessel in the lungs <which can cause chest pain, breathlessness and fainting>

pulmonary fibrosis

see fibrosis, pulmonary

pulmonary nodule

a small <area of damage> <lump> in the lungs

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punctate keratitis spots of inflammation in the cornea

pure red cell aplasia a condition in which no red blood cells are produced

purpura purple patches like bruising

pustulation blisters

pyelonephritis kidney infection

pyrexia **Substitute with** fever

Q

QT interval A measure of the heart's electrical activity

QT<c> prolongation abnormal electrical activity of the heart that affects its rhythm

R

radiofrequency ablation insertion of a probe into a tumour to destroy cancer cells by heat

radiolabelling a technique where a substance is <tagged/labelled> with a radioactive compound

radiotherapy treatment with radiation

Raynaud's disease (phenomenon, syndrome) severe narrowing of blood vessels in the cold <with skin turning white or blue>

receptor **When receptor occurs under mechanism of action consider saying** 'receptor (target)'

EXPLAINER

What are receptors, agonists and antagonists?

A receptor is a part of a cell that attaches to a specific substance and this attachment triggers a particular change ('response'), such as the release of messenger substances or making a protein. The substance that attaches to the receptor to bring about the change is called an agonist. The shape of agonists make them just the right fit for their receptors – a 'lock and key' mechanism because each key will fit just one lock.

Agonists are mostly substances made in the body and include neurotransmitters (released by nerves), hormones (released by special glands), and cytokines (released by cells such as those involved in inflammation). But agonists can also be substances introduced into the body and many medicines work by acting as agonists which attach to specific receptors to trigger a response.

Some substances can attach to the receptor without triggering a response. By sitting in the receptor they block the agonist from attaching to the receptor and having an effect. These substances are called antagonists or blockers. Many medicines have been developed to be antagonists at particular receptors and they prevent harmful overactivity at those receptors.

rectum the lowest part of the gut <that stores faeces>

recurrence when <symptoms/the disease> come(s) back <after treatment>

recurrent <has come back/keeps coming back> <after previous treatment>

refractory when treatment does not work

registry (patient or disease) ongoing collection of information about <a specific group of> patients affected by a particular condition

relapse when <symptoms/the disease> come(s) back <after treatment>

relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis **see** multiple sclerosis, relapsing-remitting

remission a period without disease symptoms after treatment

renal	Do not use. Write: kidney
-------	----------------------------------

renal failure	inability of the kidneys to work properly
---------------	---

renal failure, chronic	long-term, progressive decrease in the kidneys' ability to work properly
------------------------	--

renal impairment	reduced kidney function
------------------	-------------------------

resistant (treatment)	when treatment does not work
-----------------------	------------------------------

respiratory depression	inhibition of breathing
------------------------	-------------------------

respiratory failure	inability of the lungs <to work properly> <to take in oxygen and get rid of carbon dioxide properly>
---------------------	--

respiratory insufficiency	difficulty breathing
---------------------------	----------------------

respiratory system	lungs and airways
--------------------	-------------------

respiratory tract congestion	blocked airways
------------------------------	-----------------

respiratory tract infection	Infection of the airways
-----------------------------	--------------------------

response rate	Do not use. Write: number of patients who respond to treatment
---------------	---

restless legs syndrome	a disorder where the patient has uncontrollable urges to move the legs to stop uncomfortable, painful or odd sensations, usually at night
------------------------	---

reticulocytopenia	low levels of reticulocytes, a type of immature red blood cell
-------------------	--

retina	the light sensitive membrane at the back of the eye
--------	---

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retinopathy damage to the retina

revascularisation restoration of blood flow

reverse transcriptase an enzyme produced by <virus> that allows it to infect cells in the body and make more viruses

rhabdomyolysis breakdown of muscles often leading to kidney damage

rheumatoid arthritis an immune system disease causing damage and inflammation in the joints

rhinitis stuffy and runny nose

rhinitis, allergic stuffy and runny nose <with inflammation> caused by an allergy <e.g. hay fever or dust-mite allergy>

rhinorrhoea **Substitute with** runny nose

ribosomes the parts of the cell that produce proteins

rigors shaking chills

RNA genetic material <instructions for producing proteins>

rotavirus a virus that causes gastroenteritis

rubella German measles

S

saccadic (eye movements) rapid eye movements

scleroderma	hardening of the skin and connective tissue around internal organs
sclerosis, systemic	see scleroderma
seasonal allergic conjunctivitis	inflammation of the eyes caused by pollen in patients with hay fever
seasonal allergic rhinitis	hay fever
secondary progressive multiple sclerosis	see multiple sclerosis, secondary progressive
sedation	<calming effect> <induce sleepiness>
seizure	<epileptic> fit
seizure, absence	a type of fit during which a person has a blank stare but is partly aware of surroundings
seizure, atonic	brief loss of muscle control and reduced consciousness
seizure, atypical absence	a type of fit during which a person has a blank stare <possibly losing awareness of surroundings>
seizure, generalised	fit affecting most or all of the brain
seizure, myoclonic	short, shock-like jerks of a muscle or group of muscles
seizure, partial<-onset> <with <or without> secondary generalisation>	epileptic fit starting in one specific part of the brain <Secondary generalisation is when the seizure subsequently spreads to the whole brain>
seizure, tonic	brief fit with muscle contraction
seizure, tonic-atonic	a type of epileptic fit that often involves the patient falling to the floor
seizure, tonic-clonic	major fit, including loss of consciousness

sensitivity (of disease)	when a condition is treatable by a <medicine> <group of medicines>
--------------------------	--

sensitivity (test)	a measure of how well a test can detect those who have a <disease> <condition>
--------------------	--

sensory neuropathy	see neuropathy, sensory
--------------------	--------------------------------

sepsis	<when bacteria and their toxins circulate in the blood leading to organ damage> <blood poisoning>
--------	---

septic shock	a dangerous drop in blood pressure caused by severe infection
--------------	---

septicaemia	blood poisoning
-------------	-----------------

seroconversion	development of antibodies <(proteins in the body's defence system)> against a specific target
----------------	---

serum sickness	allergic reaction to injected proteins <and blood products> <with fever, rash, joint pain, digestive system problems and headache>
----------------	--

shingles	a painful, blistering rash in one part of the body
----------	--

shock	a steep fall in blood pressure
-------	--------------------------------

sinus node	the 'pacemaker' for the heart that controls the heart contractions and regulates heart rate
------------	---

sinus rhythm	normal heartbeat
--------------	------------------

sinuses	air-filled passageways in the bones around the nose and eyes
---------	--

sinusitis	inflammation of the sinuses
-----------	-----------------------------

sleep apnoea	frequent interruption of breathing during sleep See also obstructive sleep apnoea
--------------	--

sleep latency	the length of time taken to fall asleep
---------------	---

slit lamp	an instrument used by eye specialists to look into the eye
-----------	--

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soft tissues	tissues just below the skin
--------------	-----------------------------

somnolence	sleepiness
------------	------------

spasticity	continuously stiffened muscles
------------	--------------------------------

specificity (test)	a measure of how well a test can distinguish people with a condition from those who don't have it
--------------------	---

splenomegaly	enlarged spleen
--------------	-----------------

sputum	phlegm
--------	--------

ST segment elevation	an abnormal reading on the electrocardiogram (ECG)
----------------------	--

stable angina pectoris	see angina pectoris
------------------------	----------------------------

statin	the standard type of medicine used to reduce cholesterol
--------	--

status epilepticus	an epileptic fit, or series of fits, lasting longer than 5 minutes
--------------------	--

stem cell transplant	see haematopoietic (blood) stem cell transplantation
----------------------	---

stem cells (haematopoietic stem cells)	cells that can develop into different types of (blood) cells
---	--

stenosis	narrowing of a <body passage> <blood vessel>
----------	--

stenosis, aortic	narrowing of the aorta
------------------	------------------------

stent	a short tube placed in an artery to prevent it closing up
-------	---

steroid	Preferably use corticosteroid except where glucocorticoid needs to be distinguished from mineralocorticoid, in which case use glucocorticoid
---------	--

Stevens-Johnson syndrome	life-threatening reaction with flu-like symptoms and painful rash affecting the skin, mouth, eyes and genitals
--------------------------	--

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stomatitis	inflammation of the lining of the mouth
strain	Do not translate, but explain by using in context, e.g. 'the strain of flu virus responsible for a pandemic'
stroke	sudden interruption of blood flow in the brain which can cause paralysis and unconsciousness
stroke, haemorrhagic	stroke <(sudden interruption of blood flow in the brain)> caused by bleeding in a part of the brain
stroke, ischaemic	stroke <(sudden interruption of blood flow in the brain)> caused by blocked blood supply to a part of the brain
subcutaneous injection	Substitute with injection under the skin
subcutaneous(ly)	Avoid. Use: under the skin
sublingual tablet	a tablet which is placed under the tongue where it dissolves
sulphonylureas	No definition required. We just say other medicines to treat diabetes
supportive care	treatment to prevent or relieve the symptoms of the disease <but not specific treatment against the disease>
surfactant (lung)	a substance lining the airsacs which allows gases to pass easily between the lung and blood
survival, overall	how long patients live
survival, progression-free	see progression-free survival
suspension	a liquid with solid particles in it No need to describe when part of pharmaceutical form, e.g. suspension for injection
sutured	stitched
syncope	fainting
systemic (side effects)	side effects that can affect anywhere in the body

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systemic treatment	treatment with <a> medicine<s> given <by mouth> <or> <by injection>
--------------------	---

systemic lupus erythematosus	a condition in which the body's defence system attacks normal tissue causing symptoms such as swollen joints, tiredness and rashes
------------------------------	--

systolic blood pressure	see blood pressure, systolic
-------------------------	-------------------------------------

T

T cells	cells in the immune system
---------	----------------------------

T lymphocytes	use T cells unless it is necessary to introduce the term lymphocyte, in which case say T lymphocytes (T cells) the first time and then use T cells
---------------	---

tachycardia	Substitute with rapid heartbeat
-------------	--

tachypnoea	rapid breathing
------------	-----------------

tapering (dose)	reducing the dose gradually
-----------------	-----------------------------

tardive dyskinesia	uncontrolled movements of the face and jaw
--------------------	--

tenosynovitis	inflammation of the sheath surrounding a tendon
---------------	---

teratogen	a substance that can cause birth defects in the unborn baby
-----------	---

teratogenicity	ability to cause birth defects
----------------	--------------------------------

thrombin	a protein involved in blood clotting
----------	--------------------------------------

thrombocytopenia	low blood platelet counts <which can lead to bleeding and bruising>
------------------	---

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thromboembolism	problems due to the formation of blood clots in the blood vessels
-----------------	---

thrombolytic	dissolves blood clots
--------------	-----------------------

thrombophlebitis	inflammation in a vein leading to a blood clot <and blockage>
------------------	---

thrombosis	formation of blood clots in the blood vessels
------------	---

thrombotic events	problems due to the formation of blood clots in the blood vessels
-------------------	---

thymus gland	a gland <in the chest> that prepares <cells> <lymphocytes> to help the body's defences
--------------	--

tibia	shin bone
-------	-----------

time to (disease) progression	Do not use. Explain as: the time until the disease started worsening <again>
-------------------------------	---

time to treatment failure	Do not use. Explain as: the time until the treatment stopped working
---------------------------	---

tinnitus	ringing or buzzing in the ears
----------	--------------------------------

tonic-atonic seizure	see seizure, tonic-atonic
----------------------	----------------------------------

tonic-clonic seizure	see seizure, tonic-clonic
----------------------	----------------------------------

tonic seizure	see seizure, tonic
---------------	---------------------------

tonsillitis	infection of the tonsils
-------------	--------------------------

tophi	deposits of uric acid crystals in joints, skin or cartilage <which can cause damage>
-------	--

topically	on the skin
-----------	-------------

torsades de pointes	abnormal electrical activity in the heart with life-threatening rhythm disturbance
---------------------	--

torticollis	see cervical dystonia
-------------	------------------------------

toxic epidermal necrolysis	life-threatening reaction with flu-like effects and blistering in the skin, mouth eyes and genitals
----------------------------	---

toxin	a harmful substance produced by infectious organisms
-------	--

toxoid	an inactivated toxin
--------	----------------------

trachea	windpipe
---------	----------

transdermal patch	patch to give <a medicine> <medicines> through the skin
-------------------	---

transplant rejection	when the immune system attacks the transplanted organ
----------------------	---

trauma	<severe> injury
--------	-----------------

treatment-experienced	use <had been> treated for <disease> before
-----------------------	--

treatment-naïve	use <had> never <been> treated for <disease>
-----------------	---

tremor	shaking
--------	---------

triglycerides	a type of fat
---------------	---------------

trismus	contraction of the jaw muscles which holds the mouth shut
---------	---

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tumour lysis syndrome	a serious <side effect> <complication> with rapid break down of cancer cells <causing high levels of uric acid, potassium and phosphate>
-----------------------	--

tumour progression	tumour getting worse
--------------------	----------------------

U

ulcer	open sore
-------	-----------

ulcer, neuropathic	open sore caused by a nerve problem
--------------------	-------------------------------------

ulcers, digital	sores on the fingers and toes
-----------------	-------------------------------

ulcerative colitis	inflammation of the large intestine causing ulceration and bleeding
--------------------	---

unresectable	cannot be removed by surgery
--------------	------------------------------

unstable bladder	an overactive bladder, when the bladder muscles contract suddenly
------------------	---

upper respiratory tract infection	see infection, upper respiratory tract
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urethra	the tube that leads from the bladder to the outside <of the body>
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urge incontinence	see urinary urgency
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urgency	sudden urge to pass urine
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uricaemia	high blood levels of uric acid
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urinary retention	inability to completely empty the bladder
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urinary tract structures that carry urine <such as the bladder>

urinary tract infection infection of the structures that carry urine

urinary urgency sudden urge to pass urine <with urine leakage>

uterus womb

urticaria itchy rash

uveitis inflammation of the uvea, the layer beneath the white of the eyeball

V

varicella chickenpox

varices swollen <and knotted> veins

vascular <affecting> <of> blood vessels

vasculitis inflammation of blood vessels

vasoconstrictor a substance that narrows blood vessels

vasodilation widening of the blood vessels

vaso-occlusive crises when blood vessels become blocked by abnormal red blood cells, restricting the flow of blood to an organ

vasopressors medicines that increase blood pressure

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ventilator a machine that helps a patient to breathe

vertebral **avoid; use** (of the) spine

vertigo a spinning sensation

ventricle (heart) one of the two lower chambers of the heart <that pumps blood into the circulation>

ventricular fibrillation **see** fibrillation, ventricular

vesicle spot

viral load the amount of virus found in the blood

viral vector a virus that has been altered so that it can carry genetic material into cells

visual acuity sharpness of vision

vitreous floaters small, dark shapes moving in the field of vision

volume depletion reduced amounts of fluids in the body

W

X

Y

Z

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