

Glossary

111: telephone triage and advice service set up by the UK government for the public to access care for urgent medical problems.

999: the telephone number in the UK for emergency services such as the police, ambulance and fire brigade.

Abscess: a collection of pus.

AccuRx: a software program used to text patients and conduct video consultations.

Acute: used to describe a disorder or symptom that comes on suddenly and needs urgent treatment.

AED: automated external defibrillator.

AIDS: acquired immune deficiency syndrome – the result of a virus transmitted in sexual fluids and blood.

Ambulatory: referring to patients who are able to walk to appointments or to hospital.

Angiography: special type of X-ray used to look at blood flow.

ARF: acute renal failure – occurs in previously normal kidneys following events such as crush injuries, heart failure or infection, and is usually reversible.

Arthrocentesis: procedure of aspirating synovial fluids out of a joint.

AVN: acute vestibular neuritis – inflammation of the vestibule within the inner ear.

AVPU: Alert, Verbal, Pain, Unresponsive – a scale used to quantify consciousness.

Bacteriuria: the presence of bacteria in the urine.

Blanching: to make pale; a rash can be made to blanch by applying pressure over the surface.

BLS: basic life support.

BMA: British Medical Association – the professional association of doctors.

Bradycardia: reduced heart rate, <60 beats per minute.

Bulla (plural bullae): a large blister (>5mm in diameter) containing serous fluid.

Bullous: characterised by blisters or bullae on the skin.

CAD: coronary artery disease – used to describe diseases of the blood vessels of the heart.

Carotid: relating to the two main arteries carrying blood to the head and neck.

CCF: congestive cardiac failure.

CD: controlled drug.

CENTOR criteria: a scale used to assess the need for antibiotics in patients with throat infections.

CHD: coronary heart disease – a general term to describe diseases of the heart.

Chemotherapy: the use of chemicals to destroy cancer cells or slow down cancer growth.

Cholecystitis: inflammation of the gall bladder.

CMHT: community mental health team.

Consultant: a senior doctor who takes full responsibility for the clinical care of patients.

Contralateral: opposite side.

COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Coryza: inflammation of the mucous membranes of the nose causing catarrh and congestion.

Covid-19: an illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus that resulted in a pandemic in 2020.

CPN: community psychiatric nurse.

CPR: cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

CRB-65 score: a modification of the CURB score.

CRP: C-reactive protein, a measure of inflammation in the body. The result is obtained via a blood test.

CT: computerised tomography – a scan to identify abnormalities in the body.

CTPA: CT pulmonary angiogram – a scan to look at the blood vessels of the lungs.

CURB score: Confusion, Urea, Respiratory rate, Blood pressure. A scale used to determine the prognosis of patients with community-acquired pneumonia.

CVA: cerebrovascular accident – the medical term for a stroke, which is the interruption of blood flow to an area of the brain, caused by a blood clot blocking a blood vessel or artery or a blood vessel breaking.

D-dimer: a fibrin degradation product found in the blood – this is elevated if there is a blood clot within the blood vessels.

Dermatology: concerned with the skin and skin conditions.

Dermatome: the area of the skin supplied by a single spinal nerve root.

Dialysis: purification or filtering of the blood to remove harmful elements when kidneys, which normally perform this function, have failed.

Diaphoresis: excessive sweating.

Diathesis: a tendency to suffer from a particular medical condition.

DKA: diabetic ketoacidosis – a lack of insulin resulting in a build-up of harmful ketones in the body.

DVT: deep vein thrombosis – a blood clot within the deep veins, usually occurring in the legs.

Dysdiadochokinesia: inability to perform rapid alternating movements.

Dysphagia: difficulty swallowing.

Dysphonia: hoarse voice.

Dyspnoea: breathlessness or shortness of breath.

Dysuria: pain on passing urine.

EBV: Epstein–Barr virus – the cause of glandular fever.

ECG: electrocardiogram – used to measure electrical activity of the heart.

ECHO (cardiogram): a scan used to look at the structure of the heart.

ED: emergency department, also known as the casualty department or accident and emergency (A&E).

EEG: electroencephalogram – used to measure electrical activity of the brain.

Elective: used to describe operations, procedures or treatments that are planned rather than carried out in an emergency.

Embolism: a clot within the arteries.

Endoscopy: the insertion of a tube-shaped instrument called an endoscope into a body cavity, to investigate or treat various medical problems, e.g. gastroscopy, colonoscopy.

ENT: ear, nose and throat.

Enteral: intake of food or substances via the gastrointestinal tract.

Erythema: superficial reddening of the skin.

ESR: erythrocyte sedimentation rate – a measure of inflammation in the body. The result is obtained via a blood test.

Exudate: a mass or covering of cells and fluids that has seeped out of blood vessels or tissue.

Fistula: the joining of an opening with a body cavity.

Gastroenterology: to do with the gastrointestinal tract.

GCS: Glasgow Coma Scale – used to quantify consciousness.

GI: gastrointestinal.

GIT: gastrointestinal tract.

Glans: the head of the penis.

Glass test: a test used to determine if a rash is blanching or non-blanching. If the rash can be seen through a glass tumbler when it is pressed on the skin, it is considered to be non-blanching.

GMC: General Medical Council, the organisation that licenses doctors to practise medicine in the UK.

Goitre: an enlarged thyroid gland.

GORD: gastro-oesophageal reflux disease.

GP: general practitioner – a doctor providing primary care services, usually providing the first point of contact for NHS patients.

GTN: glyceryl trinitrate, a medicine used to dilate coronary blood vessels and treat angina.

GUM: genitourinary medicine – usually used as the name of a clinic treating sexually transmitted diseases.

GUT: genitourinary tract.

Gynaecology: healthcare that focuses on women's reproductive systems.

Haematemesis: vomiting of blood.

Haematology: conditions related to the blood.

Haematoma: a solid swelling of clotted blood within the tissues.

Haematospermia: blood in the semen.

Haematuria: blood in the urine.

Haemoptysis: blood in the sputum.

Hb: haemoglobin.

HCP: healthcare professional.

Hepatitis: inflammation of the liver.

HIV: human immunodeficiency virus.

HONK: hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic non-ketotic – a state of extreme elevations of blood glucose, resulting in hyperosmolality and dehydration.

HRT: hormone replacement therapy.

HSV: herpes simplex virus.

Hydronephrosis: swelling of the kidneys due to a build-up of urine within them.

Hyperacusis: sounds feel much louder than they should be.

Hyperaemia: an excessive supply of blood.

Hypercholesterolaemia: raised cholesterol in the blood serum.

Hyperosmolality: increased concentration in a fluid such as blood or urine.

Hypertension: high blood pressure, usually >140/90mmHg.

Hypotension: low blood pressure, usually <100/60mmHg.

Hypovolaemia: a decreased volume of circulating blood in the body.

Hypoxaemia: low oxygen saturation in the blood.

Hypoxia: low oxygen saturation in the tissues.

Hysteroscopy: a procedure to examine the inside of the womb.

IAPT: improving access to psychological therapies – refers to services which provide evidence-based treatments for people with anxiety and depression.

Iatrogenic: illness caused by medical examination, assessment or treatment.

IDDM: insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus.

ICE: ideas, concerns and expectations.

ICU: intensive care unit.

Introitus: the opening of the vagina.

Intubate: to insert a breathing tube into the trachea.

Ipsilateral: same side.

ITU: intensive treatment unit.

IUD: intrauterine device.

IVF: *in vitro* fertilisation – the process by which an egg is fertilised in a test tube before implantation in the mother's womb.

JVP: jugular venous pressure.

Koplik spots: white pinprick spots on the buccal mucosa, pathognomonic of measles.

KUB: kidney, ureter, bladder.

LP: lumbar puncture – the insertion of a hollow needle into the spinal canal, to inject drugs or other substances or to withdraw cerebrospinal fluid.

Macule: flat discoloured area of the skin <1cm in diameter.

MCCD: medical certificate of cause of death.

MDT: multidisciplinary team – different healthcare professionals come together to discuss the diagnosis and treatment plans for patients.

MDU: Medical Defence Union – provider of indemnity insurance to healthcare professionals.

Melaena: dark sticky stool indicative of digested blood.

MI: myocardial infarction.

Micturition: the act of passing urine.

MIU: minor injuries unit.

MPS: Medical Protection Society – provider of indemnity insurance to healthcare professionals.

MR (m/r): modified release.

MRI: magnetic resonance imaging – scanners are used to detect soft tissue abnormalities within the body.

MTX (methotrexate): an immunosuppressant used to treat certain immune conditions.

N/A: non-applicable.

NAI: non-accidental injury.

Neonatal: newborn babies up to the age of four weeks.

Neoplasm: any abnormal new growth of tissue.

Nephrology: the detection and diagnosis of renal (kidney) disease and the long-term management of its complications.

Neurology: study and treatment of nerve systems.

NHS: National Health Service.

NHS Trusts: set up to deliver NHS healthcare. The term can relate to organisations providing primary, secondary or community care.

NICE: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: set up by the UK government to advise on effectiveness of healthcare and treatments.

NIDDM: non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus.

NSAID: non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug.

NSTEMI: non-ST elevation myocardial infarction.

OA: osteoarthritis.

Odynophagia: pain on swallowing.

On-call: the member of staff or professional who is available outside normal working hours.

Orthopnoea: breathlessness on lying flat.

OTC: over the counter – refers to medication which can be obtained or purchased from a pharmacy.

Paediatrics: relating to children.

Palliative: relieving symptoms without treating the underlying cause.

Pallor: pale (e.g. skin).

Pandemic: prevalent over the whole world.

Papule: a solid, elevated skin lesion <5mm in diameter.

Parenteral: the intake of nutrition through the veins.

PE: pulmonary embolism – a blood clot within the arteries of the lungs.

PEFR: peak expiratory flow rate – a measure of airway obstruction.

Peritonitis: inflammation of the peritoneum, a layer of tissue within the abdomen.

Pharmacists: people who are qualified to dispense medicines on prescription and advise people about OTC medical products. They usually work in a pharmacy.

PID: pelvic inflammatory disease – refers to inflammation of the pelvis, usually caused by an infection.

Pleural aspiration (tap): a small needle is inserted into the space between the lungs and the chest wall to remove fluid or air that has accumulated around the lung.

PMR: patient medical record – a summary of the patient's medical record which is shared between various health organisations.

PND: paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea – intermittent breathlessness when asleep at night.

PPI: proton pump inhibitor – a medication used to reduce stomach acid.

Primary care: the first stage of treatment when a person is ill, usually provided by a healthcare professional in the community.

Pruritus: itch.

Pulmonary: relating to the lungs.

Pyrexia: a high temperature.

Pyuria: pus in the urine.

Quinsy: an abscess that develops within the tonsils.

RA: rheumatoid arthritis.

RACPC: rapid access chest pain clinic. A service set up by hospital Trusts to ensure the rapid assessment of patients with suspected ischaemic heart disease.

Radiology: the use of X-rays and radioactive substances for diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Radiotherapy: the use of high-energy radio waves to destroy or shrink cancer tumours.

Red flag: symptoms that indicate a potentially serious disease and warrant prompt investigation and treatment.

Respiratory: related to the respiratory (breathing) system, which includes the nose, throat (pharynx), larynx, windpipe (trachea), lungs and diaphragm.

Rhinorrhoea: a runny nose.

Romberg's test: this tests the body's joint position sense and the dorsal columns of the spinal cord. Ask the patient to stand, arms stretched out and with the eyes closed. If the patient is able to maintain their balance, the test is negative and there is no abnormality.

RSV: respiratory syncytial virus.

SAH: subarachnoid haemorrhage.

SCR: summary care record – a summary of the patient's medical record which is shared between various health organisations.

Secondary care: the second stage of treatment when someone is ill; usually provided within a hospital.

Snellen chart: an eye chart used to measure visual acuity.

SpO₂: oxygen saturation – the amount of oxygen, expressed as a percentage, carrying haemoglobin in the blood.

SSRI: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor – drug used to treat mood disorders.

Staphylococcus: a bacterium with many pathogenic species (e.g. *aureus*), that commonly causes skin infections.

STD: sexually transmitted disease.

STEMI: ST elevation myocardial infarction.

STI: sexually transmitted infection.

Streptococcus: a bacterium with many pathogenic species which can cause infections in humans.

Stroke: the interruption of blood flow to an area of the brain, caused by a blood clot blocking a blood vessel or artery or a blood vessel breaking.

Syringe driver: a battery-powered infusion device.

T&O: trauma and orthopaedic – covers injuries and conditions relating to bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves.

Tachycardia: raised heart rate, i.e. >100 beats per minute.

Tachypnoea: increased respiratory rate, i.e. >18 breaths per minute.

Tenesmus: a feeling or sensation of needing to open the bowels.

Tertiary care: the third and highly specialised stage of treatment, usually provided in a hospital centre which is considered to be super-specialised.

Thrombolysis: the dissolving of a blood clot.

TIA: transient ischaemic attack – this occurs due to a short interruption to the blood supply to the brain; symptoms resolve within 24 hours.

Tinnitus: noises heard in the ear without an external cause.

TMJ: temporomandibular joint.

Trauma: the effect on the body of a wound or violent impact.

Triage: a system which sorts medical cases in order of urgency to determine how quickly patients receive treatment, for instance in accident and emergency departments.

Urology: medical treatment that concerns the urinary system.

USS: ultrasound scan, a way of looking at tissues in the body using ultrasonic sound waves.

UTC: urgent treatment centre.

UTI: urinary tract infection.

Vascular: to do with the arteries and veins carrying blood around the body.

Vesicle: fluid-filled blister (<5mm in diameter).

Wells score: a scoring tool used to determine the likelihood of a DVT.

WHO: World Health Organization.

X-ray: part of a group of technologies collectively known as radiology. Used to produce images from inside the human body.