

MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

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Preview

Goals and Objectives:

As allied health professionals we have moved into a more medical realm, and our need for a strong medical vocabulary has become greater. Since it would be impossible to memorize all of the terms with which you must become familiar, it will be an easier task to master if you understand more about the way medical terms are combined or put together. Smaller pieces of words are joined together to build a meaning. If you can understand the basics of the small parts, then it will be easier to decipher the meaning of words that are unfamiliar to you. This home study unit will concentrate on medical terms that you will commonly use when communicating with other professionals in the health care industry.

When you complete this study unit you will be able to:

- Identify many of the common roots, prefixes, and suffixes that are used in the hair removal profession
- Determine the meaning of medical terms by analyzing their component parts
- Familiarize yourself with medical specialties
- Learn the correct pronunciation of medical words

Using this study unit:

So you will be able to learn the correct pronunciation of these medical terms, a phonetic spelling of each new word will be included in the material. You will find this phonetic spelling in parenthesis after the term. This method spells the word as it actually sounds. Always say the word out loud as you read and learn new terms. The basic rules are fairly simple.

1. Vowel sounds that are marked with a straight line above them are called ‘long’ vowel sounds. For example the phonetic spelling of *mate* is māt, the phonetic spelling of *bite* is bīt, the phonetic spelling of *home* is hōm, and so on.
2. Short vowel sounds are marked with a breve (˘) over them. Therefore, the phonetic spelling of *bat* is băt, the phonetic spelling of *met* is mĕt, the phonetic spelling of *bit* is bĭt, and so on.
3. The primary stress in a word is indicated by a single boldface accent (ˈ) and the secondary stress is indicated by a double lightface accent (ˉ).

ǎ as in mǎp

ā as in lāke

ě as in bĕt

ē as in rēflex

ĭ as in lĭp

ī as in pīe

ō as in hōt

ō as in nō

ŭ as in hŭg

ū as in ūion

oo as in booth

oy as in boy

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Check your Knowledge Answers

Examination

HOW MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY IS USED

Introduction

Medical vocabulary originates from Greek and Latin. Much of our medical language comes from Hippocrates, the “Father of Medicine”. He was a Greek physician in the fourth century B.C. and was the author of the Hippocratic oath. Since most medical terms are compound English derivatives of Latin and Greek it is impossible to always achieve a word for word translation.

Although medical terminology is primarily compiled from ‘dead’ languages, it is as much a living language as English! Hundreds of new words are born into it and hundreds die of disuse in each medical generation. New medical words are always being created, and it should come as no surprise that learning medical technology is very similar to learning a foreign language.

Medical words are not monotonous. Each separate syllable holds a meaning. A mixture of roots from both languages, or a Greek prefix to a Latin stem is common. These words are called *hybrids*.

EPILEPTIFORM	(Gr. <i>Epileptos</i> , L. <i>forma</i>)
ENDOCERVICITIS	(Gr. <i>Endon</i> , L. <i>cervix</i> , Gr. <i>itis</i>)
EXTRASYSTOLE	(L. <i>extra</i> , Gr. <i>systole</i>)

Listed below are some common body parts, with their Latin and Greek terms.

PART	LATIN	GREEK	DISEASE
Skin	<i>Cutis</i>	<i>Derma</i>	Dermatitis
Gland	<i>Glandula</i>	<i>Aden</i>	Adenitis
Breast	<i>Mamma</i>	<i>Mastos</i>	Mastitis
Muscle	<i>Musculus</i>	<i>Mys</i>	Myositis
Stomach	<i>Stomachus</i>	<i>Gaster</i>	Gastritis
Womb	<i>Uterus</i>	<i>Metra</i>	Metritis

To accurately interpret a medical term, you may need to consult a good medical dictionary.

Learning another language is not just a matter of memorizing the new words, but of learning the rules that govern it. The order in which a word is constructed will affect its meaning. Take a look at the following English sentences and you will see how important order can be.

The ball hit John

Hit John the ball.

Hit the ball, John.

Now, take a look at how much punctuation can change the meaning of the following sentence.

John hit the ball.

John, hit the ball!

Words and groups of words all have specific meanings. If you change the order of these words, then you change their meaning. There are some rules for the language of medical terminology, but they are not that hard to learn. If you know the meaning of the word parts, then you can usually analyze most of the words that you come across.

WORD ANALYSIS

Analysis is the separation of a whole into its component parts. To understand a word, you must separate the word into its component parts, establish the meaning of those parts, and add those meanings together—in the right order! Here are the component parts that you will be working with when you are learning a new medical word or term.

- *Prefix*—a unit of meaning attached to the front (or beginning) of a word. For example, the prefix ENDO- means “within”, so ENDO-carditis” is ‘within the heart’.
- *Root*—the core or foundation of the word’s meaning. You may also find the root referred to as the ‘stem’. The root of *endo-CARDI-tis* is CARDI, which means “heart”.
- *Suffix*—a unit of meaning attached to the end of the word. The –ITIS in *endocard-ITIS* is a suffix meaning “inflammation”.
- *Combining Vowel*—a vowel (usually o) added to the end of the root, without changing the meaning. A combining vowel is positioned between two roots, or between a root and a suffix that begins with a consonant, to help make the newly combined word easier to pronounce.
- *Combining form*—the root and the combining vowel together, as in CARDI/O

Not all words have a prefix or a suffix, so don’t develop the habit of thinking that the beginning of all words is a prefix or the endings of all words are a suffix. Sometimes words can begin or end with a root—and often do!

Let's take a word that we are all familiar with and analyze its component parts. We all know that the word *diagnosis* means something like "the process of finding out what is causing a patient's illness". We would consider that our 'plain English' version or translation of the word. Let's take a look at the true scientific analysis of the word *diagnosis*.

DIA-	GNOS/O	-SIS
Prefix	Root + Combining Vowel = Combining Form	Suffix
(complete)	(knowledge)	(process)

We have just 'translated' this to mean "complete knowledge process", but that seems awkward. It would sound much better if we described this as "process of complete knowledge". We have just learned from this example that we must begin reading medical words from the right, instead of from the left like we are accustomed to when reading English. *The most important rule in analyzing medical terminology is to begin at the end!*

To determine the meaning of a term, look at the parts in this order:

1. Suffix
2. Prefix
3. Root(s)

Some commonly used prefixes and suffixes, and their meanings.

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
A-, AN-	no, not, without	-ALGIA	pain
ANTE-	before	-CYTE	cell
ANTI-	against	-ECTOMY	excision, removal
AUTO-	self	-EMIA	blood condition
ECTO-	outside	-GRAM	record
ENDO-	within	-IST	specialist
EPI-	above, upon	-LOGY	study of
EX-	out	-POIESIS	formation
HYPHER-	above, excessive	-PTOSIS	prolapse, drooping
HYPO-	below, deficient	-PTYSIS	spitting
INTER-	between	-RRHAGIA	bursting forth
INTRA-	within	-RRHAGE	bursting forth
PARA-	beside	-RRHAPHY	suture
PERI-	around	-RRHEA	flow
PER-	through	-RRHEXIS	rupture
PRO-	before	-SCOPE	instrument
RE-	back, backward, again	-SCOPY	to view, examine
RETRO-	behind	-TOME	instrument to cut
SUB-	below, under	-TOMY	incision
SUPER-	above, beyond	-TRIPSY	crushing
SUPRA-	above, beyond	-TROPY	nourishment

PRACTICE TEST (1)

Give a brief definition to each of the following terms:

1. Root _____
2. Prefix _____
3. Suffix _____
4. Combining vowel _____
5. Combining form _____
6. Analysis _____

When translating a medical term you should look at the parts in this order:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SUFFIXES

The word *suffix* comes from the Latin word *suffigere*, “to fasten underneath”. When a suffix is attached to a medical term, it usually denotes a diagnosis or medical procedure.

Here are some common suffixes:

-ITIS	inflammation	<i>tonsillitis</i>	inflammation of the tonsils
		<i>bronchitis</i>	inflammation of the bronchial walls
		<i>sinusitis</i>	inflammation of the sinuses
-ECTOMY	removal	<i>tonsillectomy</i>	removal of the tonsils
		<i>appendectomy</i>	removal of the appendix
		<i>hysterectomy</i>	removal of the uterus

Common Diagnostic Suffixes

-ALGIA	pain	neuralgia (nū-ră jē-ah) nerve pain
-DYNIA	pain	gastrodynia (găś trō-dīn'e-ah) pain in the stomach
-EMIA	blood condition	leukemia (loo-kē'mēah) cancer of white blood cells
-GENIC	producing, forming	carcinogenic (kar''sī-nō-jěn'ik) cancer forming
-IA	condition, disease	polyuria (pōl''ē-ū'rē-ah) excessive urination
-ITIS	inflammation	laryngitis (lar''īn-jī'tīs) inflammation of the larynx
-OMA	tumor, mass	sarcoma (sar-kō'mah) cancerous tissue of connective tissue
-OSIS	condition	tuberculosis (too-ber''kū-lō sīs) infectious disease commonly caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis

COMMON ADJECTIVE SUFFIXES

<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
-AC, -IAC	pertaining to the heart	cardiac
-AL, -EAL, -IAL	pertaining to conditions present at birth	congenital
-AR	pertaining to ventricles of heart or brain	ventricular
-ARY	pertaining to lungs	pulmonary
-IC, ICAL	pertaining to time	chronic
-OUS	pertaining to mucus	mucous

PRACTICE TEST (2)

The combining form GASTR/O means stomach, or belly. ENTER/O means small intestine. Using the tools that you have learned for combining forms and suffixes, define the following words.

1. Gastritis _____
2. Gastralgia _____
3. Gastroenteritis _____
4. Enteritis _____
5. Gastrectomy _____
6. Gastrostomy _____
7. Gastric _____

PREFIXES

The word prefix begins with a prefix! “Pre-” means “before, in front of”. The root FIX means “attach, fasten”. So a prefix is something that is ‘attached’ to the front of something. Not all medical words have a prefix, but the prefix is always at the beginning of a word. A prefix is usually very short, and it *always* changes the meaning of the root word in some way! Prefixes most often refer to location or amount.

Prefix		Root	=	Location
SUB-	+	COSTAL	=	SUBCOSTAL
(under, below)		(pertaining to rib)		(below the rib)
SUPRA-	+	COSTAL	=	SUPRACOSTAL
(above, beyond)		(pertaining to rib)		(above the rib)

As you can see in the example above, just one or two letters can make a large difference in the meaning of a word! The same holds true for root words and suffixes.

Many times a medical word will begin with a root word, and does not have a prefix. So be careful not to mistake a root word for a prefix because it could cause you to completely misconstrue the meaning of the word!

Root words are always nouns or verbs, or the strongest point in the meaning. Prefixes are used as adjectives or prepositions, and are used to describe things rather than naming them.

ROOT WORDS & THEIR COMBINING FORMS

The foundation of a plant is its root, and the foundation or ‘origin’ of a medical term is its *root word*. When you attach other meanings in the form of prefixes or suffixes to a root word, it changes the meaning of the root word as well. Usually the only part of a word that can stand alone is its root word. It needs no prefix or suffix to make it a complete word. Although, some root words cannot stand alone.

Any time that you see the letter ‘o’ in a medical term, you should first suspect that it means that there is a root word in front of it. It does not always indicate that it is a combining form for the root word, but it is so commonly used in this way, that you should try that first.

It is easy to get confused, but since we are not studying to become brain surgeons, we only need to grasp the ‘basics’. There are always exceptions to the rules, but a basic understanding of how words are put together can help you at least get a grasp of the meaning of a medical word or phrase. Learning to turn a singular word into a plural carries its own set of rules. You will find the chart below to be of value.

Singular		Plural	
<i>a</i>	in <i>vertebra</i>	becomes <i>ae</i>	in <i>vertebrae</i>
<i>ax</i>	in <i>thorax</i>	becomes <i>axes (aces)</i>	in <i>thoraxes (thoraces)</i>
<i>en</i>	in <i>foramen</i>	becomes <i>ina</i>	in <i>foramina</i>
<i>is</i>	in <i>diagnosis</i>	becomes <i>es</i>	in <i>diagnoses</i>
<i>is</i>	in <i>femoris</i>	becomes <i>a</i>	in <i>femora</i>
<i>is</i>	in <i>metastasis</i>	becomes <i>es</i>	in <i>metastases</i>
<i>ix</i>	in <i>appendix</i>	becomes <i>ixes (ices)</i>	in <i>appendixes (appendices)</i>
<i>ex</i>	in <i>apex</i>	becomes <i>ices</i>	in <i>apices</i>
<i>nx</i>	in <i>phalanx</i>	becomes <i>ges</i>	in <i>phalanges</i>
<i>on</i>	in <i>spermatozoon</i>	becomes <i>a</i>	in <i>spermatozoa</i>
<i>um</i>	in <i>bacterium</i>	becomes <i>a</i>	in <i>bacteria</i>
<i>us</i>	in <i>nucleus</i>	becomes <i>I</i>	in <i>nuclei</i>
<i>y</i>	in <i>artery</i>	becomes <i>ies</i>	in <i>arteries</i>

Roots commonly used for medical specialties

<u>Roots</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Specialist</u>
ESTHESI/O	feeling, sensation	anesthesiologist—dealing with the administration of anesthetic agents prior to and during surgery
CARDI/O	heart	cardiologist—dealing with abnormalities, functions, diseases, & disorders of the heart
CHIR/O	hand	chiropractor—by means of manual manipulation, treats disorders originating from misalignment of the spinal vertebrae
DENT/O	tooth	dentist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of teeth & tissues of the oral cavity
DERMAT/O	skin	dermatologist—dealing with diseases & disorders of the skin
CRIN/O	secrete	endocrinologist—dealing with diseases & malfunctions of the glands of internal secretion
DEM/O	people	epidemiologist—the study of sudden outbreaks of disease, or epidemics, in a population group
GASTER/O ENTER/O	stomach intestine	gastroenterologist—diagnoses & treats disorders of the stomach & intestines
GERONT/O	old age	gerontologist—dealing with the diseases, disorders, & hygiene of old age
GYNEC/O	female	gynecologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the female reproductive system
HEMAT/O	blood	hematologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the blood & blood-forming tissues
IMMUN/O	protected	immunologist—studies the immune system
INTER/O	within, inner	internist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the internal organs
LARYNG/O	throat	laryngologist—specialist dealing with the throat & its diseases

<u>Roots</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Specialist</u>
NAT/O	birth	neonatologist—diagnoses & treats disorders of the new born
NEPHR/O	kidney	nephrologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the kidneys
NEUR/O	nerve	neurologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the nervous system including the brain
OBSTETR/O	midwife	obstetrician—provides medical care to women during & immediately after pregnancy
ONC/O	tumor	oncologist—diagnoses & treats malignant disorders
OPHTHALMO/O	eye	ophthalmologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the eye
OPT/O	eye, vision	optometrist—measures accuracy of vision & prescribes corrective lenses or eyeglasses
ORTH/O	straight, normal	orthopedist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders involving the bones, joints, & muscles
OSTE/O	bone	osteopathic—physician diagnoses & treats health problems by manipulation, & also by traditional forms of treatment
OT/O RHIN/O LARYNG/O	ear nose larynx, throat	otorhinolaryngologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the ear, nose, and throat
PATH/O	disease, suffering	pathologist—analyzes tissue samples to confirm diagnoses & performs autopsies
PED/O PEDI/A	child	pediatrician—diagnoses, treats, & prevents disorders & diseases of children
POD/O PED/I	foot	podiatrist—diagnoses, treats, & corrects disorders of the foot
PROCT/O	anus, rectum	proctologist—diagnoses & treats disorders of the anus & rectum

<u>Roots</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Specialist</u>
PSYCH/O	mind	psychiatrist—concerned with the treatment & prevention of the disorders of the mind
RADI/O	radiation	radiologist—dealing with x-rays and other forms of energy for x-raying body parts & treating diseases
RHIN/O	nose	rhinologist—dealing with the nose & its diseases
UR/O	urine, urinary organs	urologist—diagnoses & treats diseases & disorders of the system of females & the genitourinary system of males

PRACTICE TEST (3)

Name the field of specialty for each term:

1. Cardiology _____
2. Endocrinology _____
3. Gastroenterology _____
4. Gerontology _____
5. Hematology _____
6. Nephrology _____
7. Neurology _____
8. Oncology _____
9. Radiology _____
10. Urology _____

Common Prefixes

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
A- (before consonant)	no, not, without	apnea (ăp-nē'ah) without breath
AN- (before vowel)	no, not, without	analgesic (ăn''ăl-jē'sīk) drug for pain relief without affecting consciousness
AB-	away from	abductor (ăb-dŭk'tor) muscle that moves a body part away from the midline
AD-	toward, near	adductor (ah-dŭk'tor) muscle that moves a part toward the midline
ANA-	up, apart	anaphoria (ăn-ah-fō'rē-ah) tendency of the eyes to turn upward when at rest
ANTE-	before, forward	anteversion (ăn''tē-ver'zhŭn) abnormal tipping forward of an organ (such as the uterus)
AUTO-	self, own	autoimmune (aw''tō-ĭ-mŭn') production of antibodies against one's tissues
BI-	two, both	biceps (bī'sēps) muscle that has two heads or points of origin
CO- (before <i>h</i> or a vowel)	with, together	coenzyme (kō-ĕn'zīm) substance that binds with a protein to form an enzyme
COL- (before <i>l</i>)	with, together	collapse (kō-lăps') Falling together of a structure's wall
COM- (before <i>h, m, or p</i>)	with, together	compression (kŏm-presh'ŭn) squeezing together

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
COM- (before <i>h</i> or a vowel)	with, together	contraction (kǒn-trǎk'shǔn) drawing together
COR- (before <i>r</i>)	with, together	corrugator (kǒr'u-gā'ter) a muscle that wrinkles the skin
DE-	down, lack of	dehydration (dē'hī-drā'shǔn) lack of water
DIA-	through, complete	diarrhea (dī-ah-rē'ah) rapid discharge of fecal matter
DIS-	apart, away from	dissect (dī-sĕct') cut apart
DYS-	bad, painful	dysfunction (dīs-fŭnk'shǔn) abnormal function
E-	out	elution (ē-lŭ'shǔn) separation of a chemical substance
EC-, ECTO-	outer, outside	ectopic (ĕk-tŏp'ĭk) located away from normal position
EN-	in	encapsulation (ĕn-kăp'sŭ-lā'shǔn) enclosure in a capsule
ENDO-	within, inner	endometrium (ĕn-dŏ-mĕ'trĕ-ŭm) membrane lining the uterus
EPI-	above, upon	epidermis (ĕp'i-der'mĭs) outermost layer of the skin
EX-	out	excision (ĕk-sĭzh'ŭn) removal by cutting out
EXTRA-	outside of	extrapulmonary (ĕks'tra-pŭl'mĭn-ĕ'rĕ) not connected with the lungs
HEMI-	half	hemilateral (hĕm'ĕ-lăt'er-ăl) affecting one side of the body
HYPER-	excessive, above	hypertension (hĭ'per-tĕn'shǔn) persistently high blood pressure

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
HYP0-	below, deficient	hypoglycemia (hĭ'p0-gli-sēmē-ah) abnormally low level of sugar in blood
IN-	in, into	incision (ĭn-sĭzh'ŭn) cutting into
INFRA-	below, beneath	infraclavicular (ĭn''frah-klah-vĭik'ŭ-lār) below the clavicle
INTER-	between	interosseous (ĭn''ter-0s'ē-ŭs) between two bones
INTRA-	within	intravenous (ĭn''trah-vē'nŭs) within a vein
MACRO-	large	macronutrient (māk''r0-nŭ'trē-ĕnt) nutrient with a large daily requirement
MAL-	bad	malignant (mah-lĭg'nant) cancerous
META-	change	metabolism (mĕ-tāb'0-lĭzm) process of changing food to a form used by the body
	beyond	metacarpal (mĕt''ah-kār'pal) bones beyond the wrist
MICRO-	small	microscope (mĭ'kr0-sk0p) instrument used to obtain a large image of small objects
NEO-	new	neonatal (nē''0-nā'tāl) newborn
PAN-	all	panhysterectomy (pān''hĭs-ter-ĕk't0-mē) total hysterectomy
PARA-	near, along the side of	parametric (par''ah-mĕt'rĭk) near the uterus
PERI-	surrounding	peritoneum (per''ĭ-t0-nē'ŭm) membrane surrounding the abdominal and pelvic cavities

<u>Prefix</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Example</u>
POLY-	many, much	polydipsia (pōl''ē-dīp'sē-ah) excessive thirst
POST-	after, behind	posttraumatic (pōst''traw-măt'ĭk) following injury
PRE-	before	prenatal (prē-nā'tăl) before birth
PRO-	before, forward	prognosis (prōg-nō'sis) forecast of probable outcome of disease and treatment
PROS-	before, forward	prosencephalon (prōs''ēn-sef'ah-lōn) the forebrain
PSEUDO-	false	pseudoparalysis (soo''dō-pah-răl'ĭ-sīs) loss of muscular power without real paralysis
RE-	back, again	relapse (rē'lāps'') symptoms of disease returned
RETRO-	behind, backward	retrodisplacement (rē''trō-dīs-plās'mēnt) backward displacement
SUB-	beneath, less than	subcutaneous (süb''kū-tā'nē-ūs) under the skin
SUPRA-	above, upper	supraclavicular (soo'' prah-klah-vĭk' ū-lār) above the clavicle
SYN-	with, together	syndrome (sĭn' drōm) groups of symptoms that occur together
TRANS-	across, through	transverse (trāns-vers') extending through a structure from side to side
TRI-	three	triceps (trĭ'sēps) muscle formed from three divisions
ULTRA-	beyond	ultrasonic (ŭl''trah-sōn' ĭk) beyond the audible range

PRACTICE TEST (4)

Circle the correct prefix for each meaning:

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. Toward | AD- | AB- | ANA- | ANTE- | ANTI- |
| 2. Two | TRI- | BI- | UNI- | HEMI- | DIA- |
| 3. Excessive,
above | HYPO- | DYS- | PARA- | PAN- | HYPER- |
| 4. False | RETRO- | POST- | PSEUDO- | MAL- | META- |
| 5. Out, outside | ENDO- | ECTO- | EX- | ULTRA- | SUB- |

PRACTICE TEST (5)

Add the correct hyphen (-) to each term to identify each suffix (s) and prefix (p). Briefly define each term.

-DYNIA S pain

AB- P away from

1. MACRO _____
2. STOMY _____
3. ALGIA _____
4. HYPO _____
5. RRHAGE _____
6. NEO _____

PRACTICE TEST ANSWERS

(1) Page 8

1. Core meaning of a word; stem
2. Unit of meaning attached to the beginning of a word
3. Unit of meaning attached to the end of a word
4. Vowel added to the end of a root, without changing the meaning of the root
5. Root plus combining vowel (usually *o*)
6. Separation of a whole into parts

1. Suffix
2. Prefix
3. Root

(2) Page 10

1. Inflammation of the stomach
2. A stomachache
3. Inflammation of the stomach and small intestine
4. Inflammation of the small intestine
5. Surgical removal of the stomach
6. Cutting an opening into the stomach
7. Pertaining to the stomach

PRACTICE TEST ANSWERS

(3) Page 15

1. Study of the heart
2. Study of internal secretion
3. Study of stomach and secretions
4. Study of old age
5. Study of the kidney
6. Study of blood
7. Study of the kidney
8. Study of tumors
9. Study of x-rays
10. Study of the urinary system

(4) Page 20

1. AD-
2. BI-
3. HYPER-
4. PSEUDO-
5. ECTO-

(5) Page 20

1. MACRO- P
large
2. -STOMY S
opening
3. -ALGIA S
pain
4. HYPO- P
below, under, deficient
5. -RRHAGE S
bursting forth of blood
6. NEO- P
new

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