**Medical English Vocabulary**

Here is some essential vocabulary for [nurses and medical professionals](https://www.englishclub.com/english-for-work/medical.htm) working in an English-speaking context. Each word is shown with its part of speech and meaning, while an example sentence shows the word in context.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **word*part of speech*** | **meaning** | **example sentence** |
| **abnormal***adj* | not normal for the human body | This amount of weight loss is **abnormal** for women your age. |
| **ache***noun/verb* | pain that won't go away | I can't sleep because my knees **ache** in the night. |
| **acute***adj* | quick to become severe/bad | We knew the baby was coming right away because the woman's labour pains were **acute**. |
| **allergy** *noun***allergic** *adj* | a body's abnormal reaction to certain foods or environmental substances (e.g. causes a rash) | Your son is extremely **allergic** to peanuts. |
| **ambulance***noun* | emergency vehicle that rushes people to a hospital | We called the **ambulance** when Josh stopped breathing. |
| **amnesia***noun* | a condition that causes people to lose their memory | I can't remember the accident because I had **amnesia**. |
| **amputation** *noun***amputate** *verb* | permanent removal of a limb | We had to **amputate** his leg because the infection spread so quickly. |
| **anaemia** *noun***anaemic** *adj* | occurs when the body doesn't have enough red blood cells | I have low energy because I am **anaemic**. |
| **antibiotics***noun* | medication that kills bacteria and cures infections | My throat infection went away after I started the **antibiotics**. |
| **anti-depressant***noun* | medication that helps relieve anxiety and sadness | The **anti-depressants** helped me get on with life after Lucy died. |
| **appointment***noun* | a scheduled meeting with a medical professional | I've made you an **appointment** with a specialist in three week's time. |
| **arthritis***noun* | a disease that causes the joints to become swollen and crippled | My grandmother can't knit anymore because the **arthritis** in her hands is so bad. |
| **asthma (attack)***noun* | a condition that causes a blockage of the airway and makes it difficult for a person to breathe | I carry an inhaler when I run because I have **asthma**. |
| **bacteria***noun* | a disease-causing organism | To prevent the spread of **bacteria** it is important that nurses wash their hands often. |
| **bedsore***noun* | wounds that develop on a patient's body from lying in one place for too long | If you don't get up and take a walk, you will develop painful **bedsores**. |
| **benign***adj* | not harmful (not cancerous) | We're hoping that the tests will show that the lump in your breast is **benign**. |
| **biopsy***noun* | removal of human tissue in order to conduct certain medical tests | The **biopsy** ruled out a number of illnesses. |
| **blood count***noun* | the amount of red and white blood cells a person has | You will be happy to know that your **blood count** is almost back to normal. |
| **blood donor***noun* | a person who gives blood to a blood bank or other person | **Blood donors** have to answer questions about their medical history. |
| **blood pressure***noun* | the rate at which blood flows through the body (high/low) | High **blood pressure** puts you at risk of having a heart attack. |
| **brace***noun* | a device that holds injured body parts in place | You will probably always have to wear a **brace** on your ankle when you jog. |
| **breech***adj* | position of an unborn baby in which the feet are down and the head is up | We thought it was going to be a **breech** birth, but the baby turned himself around. |
| **broken***adj* | a bone that is divided in two or more pieces as a result of an injury | We thought it was just a sprain, but it turned out his leg was **broken**. |
| **bruise** *noun***bruised** *adj* | injured body tissue that is visible underneath the skin | The woman was badly **bruised** when she came into the emergency room. |
| **Caesarean section, C-section***noun* | procedure that involves removing a baby from its mother through an incision in the woman's lower abdomen | The baby was so large that we had to perform a **Caesarean section**. |
| **cancer***noun* | disease caused by the uncontrollable growth of cells | There are many different options when it comes to treating **cancer**. |
| **cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)***noun* | restoring a person's breath and circulation | You saved your brother's life by performing **CPR**. |
| **cast***noun* | a hard bandage that is wrapped around a broken bone to keep it in place | My leg was in a **cast** for graduation. |
| **chapel, chapeline***noun* | a place where loved ones can go to pray for a patient's recovery;a priest who visits patients in the hospital | If you want a place to pray, the **chapel** is on the third floor. |
| **chemotherapy***noun* | type of treatment used on cancer patients | My mother has already had three rounds of **chemotherapy**. |
| **chickenpox***noun* | a virus commonly contracted by children, characterized by itchy spots all over the body | It is best to get **chickenpox** as a child so that you don't get it worse as an adult. |
| **coroner***noun* | a person who determines the cause of death after a person dies | We only call the **coroner** if we think a death is suspicious. |
| **critical condition***noun* | requiring immediate and constant medical attention | You can't see her right now; she's in **critical condition**. |
| **crutches***noun* | objects that people with injured legs or feet use to help them walk | I'd rather hop on one foot than use **crutches**. |
| **cyst***noun* | a sac in the body-tissue filled with fluid (sometimes diseased) | We're going to remove the **cysts** just to be on the safe side. |
| **deaf***adj* | unable to hear | The accident left the patient both **deaf** and blind. |
| **deficiency***noun* | a lack of something necessary for one's health | The tests show that you have an iron **deficiency**. |
| **dehydrated***adj* | in need of water | It is easy for the elderly to become **dehydrated** in this heat. |
| **dementia***noun* | loss of mental capacity | It is hard to watch a loved one suffering with **dementia**. |
| **diabetes***noun* | type of disease typically involving insulin deficiency | People with **diabetes** have to constantly check their blood sugar levels. |
| **diagnosis***noun* | medical explanation of an illness or condition | The doctor would prefer to share the **diagnosis** with the patient himself. |
| **discomfort***noun* | experiencing pain | This pain medication should relieve some of your **discomfort**. |
| **disease***noun* | a medical disorder that is harmful to a person's health | I understand that this **disease** runs in your family. |
| **dislocated***adj* | when a bone is temporarily separated from its joint | You will have to wear a sling because of your **dislocated** shoulder. |
| **emergency***noun* | a medical problem that needs immediate attention | It is important that children know which number to dial in case of an **emergency**. |
| **ER (emergency room)***noun* | the hospital room used for treating patients with immediate and life-threatening injuries | The child was rushed into the **ER** after he had a severe allergic reaction to a bee sting. |
| **external***adj* | on the outside | This cream is for **external** use only. Do not get it near your ears, eyes, or mouth. |
| **false negative***nounadj* | a test that incorrectly comes back negative | We had two **false negative** pregnancy tests, so we didn't know we were having a baby. |
| **family history***noun* | medical background of a person's family members | The doctor was concerned about my **family history** of skin cancer. |
| **fatal***adj* | causing death | The doctor made a **fatal** error when he wrote the wrong prescription. |
| **fever** *noun***feverish** *adj* | higher than normal body temperature | He is very **feverish**, and his temperature is near danger point. |
| **flu (influenza)***noun* | many types of respiratory or intestinal infections passed on through a virus | People who have the **flu** should not visit hospital patients. |
| **fracture** *noun***fractured** *adj* | broken or cracked bone | Your wrist is **fractured** and needs a cast. |
| **germ***noun* | a micro-organism, especially one that causes disease | Flowers are not allowed in the ward to avoid the risk of **germs** being brought in. |
| **genetic***adj* | a medical condition or physical feature that is passed on in the family | The disease is part **genetic** and part environmental. |
| **growth***noun* | a ball of tissue that grows bigger than normal, either on or under the skin | That **growth** on your shoulder is starting to worry me. |
| **heart attack***noun* | instance in which blood stops pumping through the heart | People who smoke are at greater risk of having a **heart attack**. |
| **HIV***noun* | the virus that infects the human T-cells and leads to AIDS | **HIV** can be passed down from the mother to her fetus. |
| **hives***noun* | bumps that appear on the surface of the skin during an allergic reaction | I broke out in **hives** after I ate that potato casserole. |
| **illness** *noun***ill** *adj* | general term for any condition that makes a person feel sick for a certain period of time | Her **illness** went away when she started eating better. |
| **immune system***noun* | the parts of the body that fight diseases, infections, and viruses | You can't have visitors because your **immune system** is low. |
| **immunization** *noun***immunize** *verb* | an injection that protects against a specific disease | Babies are **immunized** three times in their first year. |
| **incision***noun* | cut in the body made during surgery | I had to have stitches to close the **incision**. |
| **inconclusive***adj* | unclear | We have to do more x-rays because the first ones were **inconclusive**. |
| **infant***noun* | young baby | The nurse will demonstrate how to bathe an **infant**. |
| **infection** *noun***infected** *adj* | diseased area of the body (viral or bacterial) | The wound should be covered when you swim to prevent it from becoming **infected**. |
| **inflamed***adj* | appearance (red and swollen) of an injured body part | My right ankle was so **inflamed** it was twice the size of my left one. |
| **injury***noun* | damage to the body | Her **injuries** were minor; just a few cuts and bruises. |
| **intensive care unit (ICU)***noun* | section of the hospital where patients get constant attention and doctors rely on specialized equipment | She will remain in the ICU until she can breathe on her own. |
| **internal***adj* | under the skin, inside the organs | The doctors will be monitoring her for any **internal** bleeding. |
| **itchy***adj* | feeling discomfort on the skin's surface | If you are allergic to this medication your skin will get red and **itchy**. |
| **IV***noun* | a tube that pumps liquids and medication into a patient's body | The toddler was so dehydrated that the doctor decided to get him on an **IV**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **lab results***noun* | tests that come back from a laboratory and help doctors make a diagnosis | The **lab results** have come in and you are free to go home. |
| **lab (laboratory)***noun* | place where samples of blood/urine etc. are taken for testing | I'll take these samples down to the **lab** on my way out. |
| **life support***noun* | a machine that keeps patients alive by helping them breathe | The woman has severe brain damage and is currently on **life support**. |
| **life-threatening***adj* | when injuries and conditions are extremely serious | The victim was shot in two places but the bullet wounds are not **life-threatening**. |
| **light-headed***adj* | feeling of dizziness and being off-balance, caused by lack of oxygen in the brain | If you are feeling **light-headed** again, lie down and call me. |
| **malignant***adj* | expected to grow and get much worse (especially related to cancerous cells) | I'm afraid at least one of the tumours is **malignant**. |
| **medical school (med. school)***noun* | place where someone trains to be a doctor | After eight years of **medical school** I can finally practice medicine. |
| **newborn***noun* | an infant that is less than three months old | You have to support her neck because she is still a **newborn**. |
| **numb***adj* | no feeling in a certain body part | The needle will make your lower body feel **numb**. |
| **OR (operating room)***noun* | the place where major surgeries and operations take place | You must wear a face mask and gloves while you are in the **OR**. |
| **operation** *noun***operate on** *verb* | a medical procedure that involves going inside a person's body in an attempt to fix a problem | The **operation** lasted seven hours, but it was successful. |
| **pain***noun* | strong discomfort in certain areas of the body | We gave your husband some medicine to relieve some of the **pain**. |
| **pain killer, pain reliever***noun* | type of medicine that takes away some or all of the discomfort of an illness or injury | You can take two **pain killers** every four hours. |
| **paralyzed***adj* | unable to move certain areas of the body | We thought her legs were **paralyzed** for life, but she is learning how to walk. |
| **patient***noun* | a person staying in a hospital or medical facility | The **patients** in Room 4 are not getting along. |
| **pharmacist***noun* | a person who fills a doctor's prescription and gives people advice about medication | Ask the **pharmacist** if there is a generic brand of this medication. |
| **pharmacy, drugstore***noun* | a place where people go to buy medication and other medical supplies | You should be able to buy a bandage at the **pharmacy**. |
| **physician***noun* | doctor | Ask your family **physician** to refer you to a specialist. |
| **poison** *noun***poisonous** *adj* | a substance that is very dangerous if it enters the human body | The child was bitten by a **poisonous** snake. |
| **prenatal***adj* | of the time period leading up to giving birth | The woman was well prepared for labour because she took the **prenatal** classes. |
| **prescription** *noun***prescribe** *verb* | the correct amount and type of medication needed to cure an illness or relieve symptoms | You will need to visit your doctor to get another **prescription**. |
| **privacy** *noun***private** *adj* | being alone; personal (e.g. test results) | You will have to pay for a **private** hospital room if you don't want a room-mate. |
| **radiation***noun* | high energy X-rays that destroy cancer cells | If the **radiation** doesn't kill all of the abnormal cells, the cancer will come back. |
| **residencyresident***noun* | part of a doctor's training that takes place in the hospital;a student working under a doctor | John is a **resident** under Dr Brown. |
| **routine check-up***noun* | a doctor's appointment to check a person's general health | I'd like to see you a year from now for a **routine check-up**. |
| **scrubs***noun* | plain uniform (usually green, white, or blue) worn by medical professionals | I have some extra **scrubs** in my locker. |
| **scrub up***verb* | carefully wash hands before and after seeing a patient | I have to **scrub up** and get ready for surgery. |
| **second opinion***noun* | input from a second doctor about an illness or symptom | I went to another doctor to get a **second opinion** about these headaches. |
| **seizure***noun* | sudden violent movements or unconsciousness caused by electrical signal malfunction in the brain | People who suffer from epilepsy are prone to **seizures**. |
| **shock***noun* | body not getting enough blood flow | The woman was in **shock** after being pulled from the river. |
| **side effects***noun* | other symptoms that might occur as a result of a certain medication or procedure | One of the **side effects** of antidepressants is a loss of appetite. |
| **sore***adj* | painful | I have a **sore** throat and a runny nose. |
| **spasm***noun* | the uncontrollable tightening of a muscle | Ever since I injured my leg I've been having muscle **spasms** in my upper thigh. |
| **specialist***noun* | a doctor that is an expert in a certain kind of medicine | My family doctor is sending me to a **specialist**. |
| **sprain***noun/verb* | an injury (less serious than a break) to a joint (ankle, wrist, knee etc) | I **sprained** my knee playing soccer. |
| **stable condition***noun* | a patient is stable if their medical condition is no longer changing rapidly | You can see your husband now; he is in a **stable condition**. |
| **sting***noun/verb* | sharp, temporary pain | It may **sting** when I insert the needle. |
| **stress** *noun***stressed** *adj* | worry that causes muscles to tighten and blood pressure to rise | You need to take some time off work and relieve some of your **stress**. |
| **swelling** *noun***swollen** *adj* | ligaments (parts that hold the joints together) growing bigger and rounder after an injury to a joint | I knew my ankle was sprained because it was so **swollen**. |
| **symptoms***noun* | pain or physical changes that occur because of an illness or disease | You have all of the **symptoms** of a diabetic. |
| **temperature***noun* | amount of heat measured in a body; higher than normal temperature | We brought Jesse to emergency because he was running a (high) **temperature**. |
| **tender***adj* | painful when touched or used | The incision was **tender** after the surgery. |
| **test results***noun* | medical information that helps doctors understand a patient's condition or body | The **test results** came back negative. You aren't pregnant. |
| **therapy***noun* | treatment aimed at improving a person's mental or physical condition | I was able to go back to work a few weeks after starting the **therapy**. |
| **transplant***noun* | moving of an organ from one human to another | The heart **transplant** saved your life. |
| **ultrasound***noun* | a test that examines the body's internal organs and processes using sound waves (often used during pregnancies) | The **ultrasound** shows that we are expecting a baby boy. |
| **umbilical cord***noun* | the lifeline from the mother to the fetus (when cut at birth this forms the belly button) | I had an emergency C-section because the **umbilical cord** was wrapped around the baby's neck. |
| **unconscious***adj* | alive, but appearing to be asleep and unaware of the surroundings | I hit my head on the steering wheel and was still **unconscious** when the ambulance arrived. |
| **urine sample***noun* | a small amount of the body's liquid waste that is tested for different medical reasons | The **urine sample** tells us how much alcohol is in your blood. |
| **vein***noun* | the thin tubes that transport blood around the body and back to the heart | I'm just looking for the best **vein** in which to insert the needle. |
| **virus***noun* | a dangerous organism that causes the spread of minor and major diseases | The **virus** is contractable through the exchange of bodily fluids. |
| **visiting hours***noun* | time of day when friends and family are allowed to visit patients in hospital | I'm afraid you'll have to come back during **visiting hours**. |
| **vomit***noun/verb* | discharge of a person stomach contents through the mouth | The pregnant woman can't stop **vomiting**. |
| **ward***noun* | a section of a hospital or health facility where patients stay | I should warn you that we're entering the mental health **ward**. |
| **wheelchair***noun* | a chair on wheels used for transporting patients from place to place | If you get in the **wheelchair** I'll take you down to see the garden. |
| **wound** *noun***wounded** *adj* | injury to body ("flesh wound" means not deep) | The **wounded** soldiers are being airlifted to the hospital. |
| **x-ray***noun/verb* | a photograph of a person's bones and organs | The technician took **x-rays** of my shoulder to make sure it wasn't broken. |