

How to use the Prefix, Root, Suffix (PRS) List for Beginning Students

Understanding the meaning of complex scientific medical terms is essential to the study of and practice of all medically-related professions. Many medical terms have their roots in Latin or Greek and often relate to parts of the body. For example, a common root is “derm” from the Greek word “derma” meaning skin. (For example, a dermatologist treats diseases of the skin.) Prefixes occur at the beginning of the word and suffixes are at the end of the word; they describe or qualify the root. Commit the meaning of the prefixes and suffixes to memory; you will see them used over and over again.

In this course, you will learn more about decoding long scientific terms in the mini-lectures. In addition, you will find a list of Key Terms near the beginning of each weekly lesson and be advised to use the PRS list to decode the terms. To reinforce your learning, the terms are then found in the corresponding week’s content.

We have prepared a Prefix, Root and Suffix List for Beginning Students; it lists the most common prefixes, roots and suffixes, the meaning of the prefix, root or suffix and several examples of its use. On this PRS List the prefixes (first segments) have dashes after the letters to signify the continuation of letters. Those that are commonly suffixes (last segments) have dashes at the beginning.

Here are the steps to decode a complex scientific medical term:

- First identify a term and separate it into 2 or 3 segments or syllables.
- Check the left column in the PRS List. All of the word segments in the left column are a portion or segment of a longer medical term.
- Find the segment you are interested in, look at the second column. You will find a brief meaning for that segment. Each meaning can be preceded by the phrase “pertaining to”.
- Check the third column where you will find an example of a word using the segment of interest. Sometimes the example will puzzle you. Repeat the steps above to clarify.

Example

Follow the steps of this sample decoding:

1. You find the word erythrocyte. You do not know what it means.
2. Break the word into syllables: erythro and cyte
3. Find “**erythro**” on the PRS list: pertaining to **red** (**prefix** =color describing the cell)
4. Find “**cyte**” on the PRS List: pertaining to **cell** (**root**= noun being described)

5. Ah, ha, an erythrocyte is a red cell

Did you break the code to figure out that an erythrocyte is a red (blood) cell?

PRINT your PRS List: You can use it as you work through the course and take quizzes.

Prefix, Root, Suffix (PRS) List for Beginning Health Care Students

Segment	Pertaining to	Example
A		
a--	absence of	atypical, apnea
ab--	away from	Abduct
acous--	hearing	Acoustic
ad--	toward	Adduct
adeno--	gland	adenocarcinoma
adip--	fat	adipose tissue
an--	without	Anuria
angio--	vessel	angiogram
ante--	before	antepartum
anti--	against	antibiotic
--ase	enzyme	Lipase
arthro/i--	joint	arthritis, arthrocentesis
--asthenia	weakness	myasthenia
auri--	ear	auricular
B		
bi--	twice or double	bilateral
blepharo	eye lid	blepharospasm
brachi--	arm	brachial plexus
brady--	slow	Bradycardia
C		
carcin--	cancer	carcinogenic
cardio--	Heart	cardiomegaly
--cele	pouching	cystocele
--centesis	puncture	amniocentesis
cephal--	head	hydrocephalic
cerebro--	brain	cerebral cortex
cholecysto--	gall bladder	cholecystectomy
chondro	cartilage	costochondral joint
--cidal	kill	bactericidal
coagula	curdle, clot	coagulate

contra--	opposite	contralateral
cranio--	Skull	craniotomy
--crine	secrete	endocrine
cryo--	cold	cryosurgery
cutane--	skin	subcutaneous
cysto--	bladder	cystotomy
cyto--	cell	Cytology
D		
de--	away from	dehydration
dermat--	skin	dermatological
dextro--	right	dextrocardia
dont/ent	teeth	Dental
dorsi--	the back	Dorsal
--dynia	pain	pleurodynia
dys--	difficulty	dyspnea
E		
ec--	out, away	ectopic pregnancy
--ectomy	removal	appendectomy
edema	swelling	lymphedema
--emesis	vomiting	hematemesis
--emia	blood condition	anemia
encephalo--	brain	encephalitis
endo--	inside	endoscopy
entero	intestine	gastroenterologist
epi--	on, outside of	epidural
erythro	red	erythrocyte
--esthes	sensation	anesthesia
G		
gastri/o--	stomach	gastric
--genic	producing	cardiogenic shock
genito--	reproduction	genital
geri/o--	old age	geriatric
gingiva	gum	gingival hyperplasia
glossal	tongue	glossopharyngeal nerve
--gram/graph	written, drawn	electrocardiogram
gyne--	woman	gynecology
--globin	protein	hemoglobin
--globulin	protein	thyroglobulin
H		
hemato--	blood	hematocrit
hemi--	Half	Hemiplegia

hemo--	blood	hemoglobin
hepato--	Liver	hepatomegaly
homeo--	constant	homeostasis
hydro/a--	water	hydrocephalus
hyper--	high, excessive	hypertension
hypno--	sleep	hypnotic medication
hypo--	low	hypothyroidism
hyster--	uterus	hysterectomy
I		
--ia	condition	anemia
--iac	pertaining to	cardiac
--iasis	pathological state	cholelithiasis
iatro--	physician	iatrogenic fluid overload
infra--	below	infraclavicular nodes
inter--	between	intercostal space
intra--	within	intracranial pressure
ipsi--	the same	ipsilateral
--ismus	spasm	strabismus, vaginismus
iso--	equal	isotonic solution
--itis	inflammation	arthritis
J		
juxto--	next to	juxtaposition
K		
kypho--	humped	kyphotic spine
L		
labia/o	lip	nasolabial fold
lacrim	Tear	lacrimal gland
lacta/o--	Milk	lactation
laparo	abdomen	laparoscopy
leuko	white	leukocyte
lingua	tongue	sublingual gland
lip--	fat	lipoma
--listhesis	dislocation	spondylolisthesis
lith/o	stone	cholelithiasis
--lysis	dissolve	bacteriolytic
M		
mal--	bad	malodorous
--malacia	softening	osteomalacia
--megaly	enlargement	cardiomegaly
melan/o--	black	melanous stool
--meter	to measure	thermometer

mort--	dead	postmortem
my/o--	muscle	myositis
myc/o--	fungus	mycotic toenails
myel/o--	spinal cord	myelogram
myel/o	bone marrow	myelogenous

N

narco--	sleep	narcotic
naso--	nose	Nasal
neo--	new	neoplasm
nephro--	kidney	nephritis

O

--odyn	painful	pleurodynia
--oma	mass, tumor	Lipoma
onc/o--	tumor	oncology
optic	eye, vision	optic nerve
ortho--	straight, upright	orthodontist
--osis	disease	psychosis
ossi--	bone	ossification
---ostomy	opening	colostomy
oto--	ear	otoscope
oxi--	oxygen	oxidation

P

--paresis	Weakness	hemiparesis
--pathy	Disease	neuropathy
--pectoris	Chest	pectoral muscles
ped, pes	Foot	dorsalis pedis
--penia	deficiency	ostopenia
--pepsia	stomach	dyspepsia
per--	through	percutaneous insertion
peri--	around	periorbital fracture
--phagia	swallowing	dysphagia
--phasia	speech	aphasia
--phlebo	blood, vein	phlebotomy
--phobia	fear of	claustrophobia
photo--	light	photophobia
--plasia	growth	hyperplasia
--plasty	repair	rhinoplasty
--plegia	paralysis	quadriplegic
pleura/o	the ribs	pleural cavity
--pnea	breathing	dyspnea

pneumo--	lung	pneumothorax
post--	after	postmortem
presby--	old age	presbyopia
procto--	rectum	proctology
psyc--	Mind	psychotropic drug
pyo--	Puss	pyogenic bacteria
pyro--	Fever	antipyretic drug
R		
--rrhage	burst forth	hemorrhage
--rrhaphy	suturing	herniorrhaphy
--rrhoea	out flowing	diarrheal stool
S		
sanguine	blood	serosanguinous
sarco--	muscle	sarcoma
schiz--	split	schizophrenic delusion
scler/o	hard	atherosclerotic vessels
scope	view	arthroscopic knee surgery
sero	clear fluid	Immune serum
semi--	half	semiconscious state
somat/o--	body	somatic complaint
spondylo--	spine	spondylodiscitis
--stalsis	contraction	peristalsis of the intestine
--stasis/ic	Stop	hemostatic agent
--staxis	dripping	epistaxis
stoma--	mouth	stomatitis
--ostomy	opening	colostomy
sub--	beneath	subcutaneous
super/ra--	above	supra ventricular
T		
tachy--	rapid	tachycardia
--tension	pressure	hypertension
tetan--	Rigid	tetanus
therm--	heat	thermometer
thorax--	upper chest	thoracotomy
thrombo--	blood clot	deep vein thrombosis
trans--	across	transfusion
--tripsy	crushing	lithotripsy
--trophy	development	hypertrophy
tympan/o--	eardrum	tympanic membrane
U		
uni--	one	unilateral

uri/o--	urine	urinalysis
V		
vaso--	vessel	vasoconstriction
ven--	vein	peripheral venous catheter
ventro--	belly, front	ventral hernia
vesico--	bladder	vesico-vaginal fissure
viscera--	internal organs	visceral cavity
X		
xero--	dry	xerostomia
Z		
--zyme	fermentation	enzyme