

Dictionary - Words you hear in hospital

Acute: A term used to describe an illness or disease process which comes on very quickly, is severe, or occurs over a short period of time.

Afebrile: No fever or high temperature.

Allergist/Immunologist: A specialist doctor skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of allergies and immune system problems.

Ambulant/Ambulation: Able to walk; walking.

Ambulatory: An outpatient (not admitted or staying in the hospital). An Ambulatory Care Centre or Clinic is where hospital outpatients are seen.

Anaesthetic: A medication used to cause numbness or loss of feeling of the skin and surrounding tissue before a small operation or medical procedure. It is called a local anaesthetic or a 'local'. A different type of anaesthetic is given before an operation or medical procedure and causes you to fall asleep and not remember anything. It is called a general anaesthetic or a 'general'.

Anorexia: A temporary loss of appetite or being unable to eat enough food because of illness. This only lasts a short time - usually a few days or until the illness goes away.

Anorexia Nervosa: A chronic and complex condition which may be mistaken for general anorexia, but is not the same thing.

Aphasia: Inability to speak. This may be an acute or chronic problem.

Ataxia: A loss of coordination, for example difficulty walking.

Bacteria: A 'germ' or 'bug' which is capable of causing an infection.

Benign: Not dangerous or cancerous, such as a 'benign tumour'.

Biopsy: A small sample of tissue that is usually surgically removed so it can be tested for diseases.

Blood pressure: The force of blood against the walls of the arteries. It is measured with a cuff (called a sphygmomanometer) which is placed on the upper arm or lower leg and inflated to give a numerical reading (such as 120/65). The reading is used by doctors and nurses to see if a patient needs certain medicines, fluids and so on.

Bradycardia: Slow heart rate. There are different ranges of normal heart rate for different age groups.

Cardiologist: A doctor that specialises in diseases and disorders of the heart.

Catheter: Also called a urinary catheter, is a soft tube that is inserted into the bladder to allow urine (wee) to flow out. It is sometimes put in before or after surgery, to get a urine sample to test for infection (especially in small children) or when urine measurements need to be accurate.

Chronic: Long term or permanent (such as a disability).

Constipation: Irregularity or inability to use the bowels (do a poo). The hard faeces (poo) cause straining and may result in small tears to the anus (bottom) and bleeding.

Contagious: When an infection or disease can be passed on to others.

CT (Computerized Tomography) or CAT scan: A test that shows a three dimensional image of your body. It is similar to having an X-ray.

Cyanosis: Discoloration of the skin caused by a lack of oxygen in the body, usually seen as a blue tinge or colour around the lips.

Cyst: A fluid filled sac that grows in the body.

Dermatologist: A doctor who specialises in diseases or disorders of the skin.

Diarrhoea: Frequent, fluid like bowel movements.

Dysphagia: Inability or difficulty in swallowing saliva or food.

Dysphasia: Difficulty in speaking or finding the right words.

ECG (Electrocardiogram/graph): A test used to measure the electrical activity in the heart. It is quick and painless and is done by applying sticky dots or stickers attached to leads onto the patient's chest, arms and legs and obtaining a 'picture'. It usually takes a couple of minutes.

EEG (Electroencephalograph): Is a test used to measure electrical activity in the brain. It involves applying sticky dots and leads to obtain a 'picture' of the brain's activity.

EMG (Electromyogram): A test to determine nerve function.

Enema: A fluid is placed into the anus (bottom) to cause a bowel movement. It is most commonly used as a treatment for constipation.

Epidermis: The outer layer of skin.

Epistaxis: A nose bleed.

FBE (Full Blood Examination): A routine blood test which is used to examine the make-up of the blood.

Febrile: High body temperature or fever (over 38°C).

Gastroenterologist: A doctor who specialises in diseases and disorders of the stomach and digestive system.

Hematologist: A doctor that specialises in diseases or disorders of the blood.

Hepatologist: A doctor who specialises in diseases or disorders of the liver.

Hypertension: High blood pressure.

Hypotension: Low blood pressure.

ICU (Intensive Care Unit): A unit/ward where very unwell patients are treated.

IM (Intramuscular): A medicine which is injected into a muscle (such as a vaccination).

Immunosuppression (immune deficiency or weakened immune system): When your immune system isn't able to fight infections as well as normal or not at all. This is sometimes caused by medications (such as chemotherapy) or certain illnesses.

IV (Intravenous): This term refers to a 'drip': a small, flexible tube which is inserted into a vein to deliver fluid therapy or medications.

Laxatives: A group of medicines which can help relieve constipation by promoting a bowel movement.

Livewire: A support network for young people aged 12-21 who live with, or have a sibling with, a chronic health condition.

Mentor: A person who helps a young person when needed and can give support.

Microshield: Hand sanitiser that doesn't need water.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan: A painless test that uses a strong magnetic field to get clear pictures of specific body parts, such as the brain or stomach. The patient lies in a special 'tunnel' like machine.

Nausea: Feeling as if you are going to vomit.

Neurologist: A doctor that specialises in diseases and disorders of the brain and the nervous system.

NG (Nasogastric) tube: A soft tube that is passed through the nose and into the stomach and is used to feed, administer medications or withdraw stomach contents.

Nutritionist: A specialist who gives advice on diet and nutrition.

Oncologist: A doctor that specialises in cancers and their treatments.

Otolaryngologist: A doctor that specialises in the ears, nose and throat. Also known as an ENT.

Pediatric: The practice of specialist medicine for children under the age of 18 years.

Pathologist: A specialist that identifies diseases by studying cells and tissues.

Pulmonologist: A doctor that specialises in the diseases or disorders of the lungs.

Pulse/heart rate: Is the number of times the heart beats in one minute. A pulse can be felt in the wrists, the neck or measured by a machine called an ECG.

Radiologist: A doctor that specialises in interpreting pictures (X-rays and other scans) of the body.

Spinal tap/Lumbar puncture: A procedure where a needle is inserted into the lower part of the spinal column (spine, or back) to collect fluid for testing.

Spirometer: A test that is used to assess lung function.

Starlight Express Room: A fun place to hang out located on the Ground floor (Beach) of the North Building.

SC (Subcutaneous): A medicine which is injected underneath the layers of skin.

Tachycardia: Fast heart rate.

U & E (Urea & Electrolytes): A specific blood test that checks the amount of waste products, potassium, magnesium and calcium in your body.

Ultrasound: The use of sound waves to see the inside of the body.

Urinalysis: An examination of a urine (wee) sample, usually to check for infection or other abnormalities. Also called a Full Ward Test (FWT) or 'dipstick'.

Urologist: A doctor that specialises in diseases or disorders of the urinary system and the male reproductive system.

Volunteer: A person who volunteers their time to help the hospital and is unpaid. Volunteers wear pink lanyards.

X-ray: A test which uses electromagnetic radiation to view the bones in the body, to check for fractures (breaks) and other abnormalities. It is sometimes used to check for a foreign body (such as something you may have swallowed).