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plain
language

thesaurus

for Health Communications

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH MARKETING



Plain Language Thesaurus For Health Communications

This *Plain Language Thesaurus* has been put together by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Marketing. Our aim is to help make health information clear and easy to understand.

This thesaurus offers plain language equivalents to medical terms, phrases, and references that we often use. The technical terms found in health information can be confusing. This thesaurus is a tool to help you find words that people may understand better.

While the plain language choices given here may not have the specific nuances of meaning that technical terms have, they offer the possibility for better understanding by your audience. With plain language equivalents, it is more important to be understood than to be medically precise.

Precise medical terminology is vital when communicating to those with a technical background. But the public often stumbles over such terms and misunderstands their meaning. This is especially a concern for people who do not speak English as their first language and those without strong reading skills. Reaching your audience—on their terms—is the main goal of plain language.

This is a living document. It is intended to be refined and to grow as more health communicators and experts add words, topics, health conditions, and synonyms. We have started the process of building this tool by defining the scope, format, and broad categories of terms to be included. Excellent existing resources and glossaries from CDC, HHS, and universities were reviewed for terms and subject areas. Key sources included

- www.pandemicflu.gov glossary
- *CDC Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation* glossary
- *National Immunization Program Glossary*
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/about/terms/glossary.htm>
- *Simple Words and Phrases* thesaurus at plainlanguage.gov
- *Clear Language and Design (CLAD)* thesaurus
<http://www.eastendliteracy.on.ca/ClearLanguageAndDesign/thesaurus/>
- Harvard's three *Plain Language Glossaries* (one for asthma, lupus, and arthritis).

The foundation for the terms in this initial edition was formed when preparing information for the public health threats of an influenza pandemic. We have also included other categories of disease and health conditions to provide a tool that can be referenced to make any health topic more easily understandable.

We invite you to suggest additional terms, plain language synonyms, and topics to be added in future editions. For more information, please contact Sarah Gregory at CDC by email at sgg7@CDC.GOV.



A

abdomen	stomach, stomach area, belly, tummy
ability	skill
abolish	end, do away with, get rid of
abrasion	cut, scratch, scrape
absenteeism	missing work or school
absorption	take in, soak up
accelerate	hurry, speed up, make worse, make more severe
accessible	available, on hand, understandable, usable (handicapped)
accommodate	house, let stay with, give shelter, adjust, adapt
accompany	go with, take with (medicine)
accomplish	do, finish
accumulate	add up, gather, collect
accurate	true, right, correct
acellular vaccine	a vaccine that only contains part of the virus
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	AIDS; a disease that makes it hard for your body to fight diseases
active immunity	being able to fight off a specific disease once you have had that disease
acute	sudden start, short term, quick
additional	extra, added, more
adequate	enough, the right amount
adhere	stick, follow
adjacent	beside, next to, near, touching

A •

adjuvant	something added to a vaccine to make it work better
administer	give, manage, take care of
adverse event	something bad that happens, bad reaction
adverse health effect	bad side effect, bad reaction
adverse	bad, dangerous, hurtful, harmful
advise	tell, warn, say
advocacy	support, fighting on behalf of, arguing for support
advocate	fight for, support, support person
aerobic exercise	exercise; slow and steady exercise like walking, running, biking, swimming, etc.; exercise that helps your heart stay healthy and work better; exercise that gets your heart pumping; exercise that makes you breath faster
aerobic	needs oxygen
aerosol	spray, mist
aggravate	make worse, harm, anger, hurt
aggregate	taken together, looked at all together, total, sum, combined
aggressive	pushy, dangerous, gets worse fast
airways	windpipe, breathing, tubes that take air in from the nose and mouth to the lungs, pathway from nose and mouth to lungs
alienate	push away, put by itself, turn away from, set apart
allergen	something like pollen that causes the body to react by sneezing or forming a rash
allergic	the body's reaction to something, like pollen, resulting in sneezing, sniffing, a rash, etc.
allergist	doctor who treats allergies
allergy	reaction to certain things such as food or cloth or pollen, itch, rash, hives, breathing problem



alleviate	lessen, ease, soften, improve, make better
alopecia	hair loss, balding
alteration	change, shift, adjustment
alternate	take turns, one and then the other, rotate
alternative	option, another choice, other, different way, another option, different
alveoli	tiny air sacs in the lungs
amalgamate	put together, join, combine, unite
ambulate	walk, move around
ambulatory	can walk, mobile, able to move about, walking
ameliorate	make better, improve, lessen, ease
amend	change, change later on, adjust
amnesia	forgetfulness, memory loss, not being able to remember
anaerobic exercise	exercise, fast-burst exercise, muscle-building exercise like weight lifting
anaerobic	needs lack of oxygen
anaphylaxis	shock, a sudden and severe allergic reaction, stop breathing, poisoning
anemia	tired, low iron, a low blood count that can make you tired and short of breath
annual	yearly, every year, once every year, once a year, each year
annually	yearly, every year, once every year, once a year, each year
antibiotic	drug, medicine, drug that fights bacteria, infection-fighting medicine, medicine that fights infection
antibody	your body's way to fight off infections, infection-fighting cells, cells that fight infection

A

antigen	germ, bacteria, virus, poison, something in your body that your body tries to fight off, something that helps your body fight disease
anti-inflammatory	a drug to reduce swelling, something that reduces swelling and pain, aspirin, cortisone, a drug that brings down the swelling
antiphospholipid antibody test	a test to see if you're at risk for blood clots
antiviral	medicine, drug that fights viruses
anti-virus medicine	medicine, drug that fight viruses like the flu
anxiety	fear, worry
appellant	name, name of the person, you, person making an appeal
applicant	your name, name of the person, person who is applying
apply	use, put on, rub onto, sign up for
appreciate	thank, be grateful
appropriate	take, take over, a good fit, proper, right
approximate	about, guess, around, near, close
aptitude	ability, skill, gift, talent
arguably	maybe, perhaps, possibly, could be
arthralgia	pain, pain in your joints
arthritis	pain in joints; disease of the joints that causes swelling, pain, heat, and a sense of stiffness
ascertain	find, find out, learn, make certain
asphyxiate	choke, smother, suffocate
assess	review, sum up, evaluate, to determine value
assist	help, aid
association	group, relation, organization



asthma	disease, breathing disease; long term disease of swelling of the airways of the lungs; lung disease where you have trouble breathing; disease of lungs or respiratory system
asymptomatic infection	when you're sick, but you don't feel bad, no symptoms
asymptomatic	someone who is sick but does not feel or look sick
at the present time	now, right now
atherosclerosis	hardening of the arteries, clogged blood vessels
attack	violent start, suddenly overcome by a disease, begin to harm
attempt	try, effort
attenuated vaccine	vaccine, vaccine that has a weakened form of the virus in it
attire	clothes, clothing, to dress, wear
authentic	original, real, true, actual
authorize	allow, approve, give the power to
autism	brain disorder, illness that makes it hard for someone to talk to other people
autoimmune disease	disease that makes your body attack itself
autonomous	free, by itself, independent
avail	help, aid
available	on hand, at hand, ready, near-by, handy
avian flu	bird flu
avoid	do not

B

B cells	disease fighting cells, cells that are made inside your bones and help fight disease, white blood cells
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B

bacteria	germs
behavior modification	developing new habits, changing what you do, stopping bad habits
beneficial	good, good for, helpful, useful
beneficiary	someone who receives, person who comes out ahead
benefit	help, aid
benign	not a danger, not harmful, easily treated
benign	not cancer
bereavement	grief after death, loss, sadness, mourning
beverage	drink, fluids, liquids
biannual	every two years, twice a year, two times every year
bilateral	with both sides considered, two-sided, when both sides get a say, even, balanced
bioterrorism	spreading virus or disease to cause fear or hurt
BMI	a measure of body fat based on height and weight
biota	plants and animals
bona fide	real, true
bone density test	bone strength test, a test of how solid and how strong your bones are
bone marrow	area (or the space) inside your bones where blood cells are made
booster shots	a shot you get months or years after your vaccine shot, to keep you safe from that disease
brachial neuritis	swelling of the nerves in your arms
breakthrough infection	getting a disease even though you've been vaccinated against it
bronchial tubes	the tubes letting air in and out of the lungs
bronchodilator	medicine, drug that helps you breathe easier



bursitis swollen, painful joints, disease that causes joint pain
by means of by, using, with
by which time by then

C

cancer cancer
capacity size, amount something holds, ability, space, number open
carcinogen cancer-causing
cardiologist heart doctor
cardiology medical department that treats heart problems
cardiovascular having to do with the heart and blood vessels
caries cavities, tooth decay
carrier someone who is sick and can get other people sick; animal that is sick and can make other animals sick
cartilage the smooth covering on the end of bones
case fatality ratio how many people die from a disease
cataracts a clouding of the eye that makes it hard for people to see, cloudy eyesight, cloudy vision
catastrophe disaster, tragedy
causal association causes, leads to, can cause causes your body to react
cauterize to burn a piece of the skin or tissue (usually to stop bleeding)
cease end, stop, quit
censure blame, punish
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC

C

central nervous system	brain and spinal cord
cerebral hemorrhage	stroke
cerebrovascular disease	stroke
cervix	the lower part of the uterus
cessation	stopping, quitting, ending
characteristic	mark, trait, feature
characterize	tell about, describe, define
chronic	long term, long-lasting
chronic disease	long-lasting disease, disease that lasts for years
chronic health condition	constant health problem, something that effects your health for a long period of time
chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	lung disease, such as asthma or emphysema
chronic	constant, never ending, does not go away, long term, lasting a long time
circulation	blood flow, flow of blood through the body
circumstance	event, situation, facts
clade	a group of animals that can all get the same disease
client	you, name of person
clinical	work, studies, a medical setting that involves patients
clinical	medical, work or studies in a medical setting that involve patients
clinically ill	sick, diseased
close proximity	near, near by, close, close to
coagulate	clot, set, clump together
coerce	force, make, press



cognizant	aware, know about, think of
colic	stomach pain, sick, baby with upset tummy
collaborate	work together, team up, help each other
comatose	in a coma
combination vaccine	a vaccine that helps stop more than one type of disease
commence	start, begin
communicable	catching, can be spread, can be passed to other people, can make other people sick
communicate	tell, say, call, write, talk to
community immunity	the protection people who aren't vaccinated get when most other people in their community are vaccinated
comparable	like, similar, almost the same as
compensate	make up, pay, reward
competent	skillful, able, well trained
complete	finish, fill out, end
completion	end, finish
complimentary	free
comply	do, follow, give in, obey
component	part, section
comprehensive	complete, covers everything important, thorough, all
comprise	be made up of, include
compulsion	want, urge, desire
conceive	imagine, think up
concentration	strength
concerning	about, for, on

C

conclude	end, finish
conclusive	definite, final, last,
concur	agree, feel the same way
condition	a medical problem, a disease, an illness
conditioning	physical training, training your body, fitness
conduct	do, carry on, run
congenital	born with, inborn
conjugate vaccine	a specific type of vaccine
conjunctivitis	eye infection, pink eye, swelling and redness around your eyes
conscientious	careful, thoughtful
consequently	so, which means that, as a result
consistent	stays the same
conspicuous	plain to see, obvious
constitute	made of, form, make up
construct	make, build
consult	talk with, ask, talk to, see, meet
consume	eat, drink, use up
contact	talk to, call, write, talk with, get in touch with
contagious disease	an illness that spreads to others, a disease that you can give to other people, a disease that can make other people sick
contagious	catching, spreading, able to make others sick, spreadable, a disease that can be spread from one person to another; someone who is sick and might make you sick too; sick
contain	have, keep together



contaminant	pollutant, poison, harmful ingredient, harmful chemical
contaminate	spoil, infect, dirty, poison, pollute, taint
contemplate	think about, consider
continue to	keep on, still, remain
contraceptive	birth control
contract	arrange, agree, make smaller and shorter
contraindication	dangerous to give, not good for, when a drug or procedure may be harmful
contribute	help, give
control	manage, have power over, take care of
contusion	bruise
convenient	easy to use, on hand, handy, useful
convulsion	seizure, spasm
co-operate	help, work together, assist
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, emphysema, a lung disease that makes breathing hard
coronary heart disease	heart disease
coronary thrombosis	heart attack
correspond	agree with, match, write, email
corroborate	confirm, agree with
corticosteroids	asthma drug, asthma medicine
cot death	SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome
cough etiquette	how to cough or sneeze
countermeasures	drugs to help fight sickness; flu shots; vaccines
crib death	SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome

C

criterion	sign, standard
Crohn's Disease	digestion disease
cure	heal, fix, make better; make completely better
currently	now, at this moment, right now
cushingoid	signs of high doses of medicine, drug
cutaneous	skin related, about the skin
cystitis	infection causing pain when you urinate

D

dander	flakes of skin
deceased	dead
decompose	decay, rot, break down
decontaminate	clean, kill germs, disinfect, purify, sterilize
decrease	take less, cut back, drop, lower, fall
deficiency	lack, not enough
deficient	lacking, not enough, poor
deformity	a change from the normal shape, not normal, not a normal shape, oddly shaped
degenerative	weaken, worsen, decline, decay, droop
dehydrate	need water, water loss, remove water
deltoid	arm muscle
dementia	memory loss that gets worse over time, Alzheimer's
demonstrate	prove, show
demyelinating disorder	nerve disease
deoxygenated	no oxygen
deplete	empty, take all of, reduce, sap



dermal	related to the skin
dermal	skin related
dermatologist	skin doctor
dermatology	skin doctor's office
designate	call, label, name
detect	find
deteriorate	get worse, fall apart, become unusable
determine	figure out, decide, find out, test
detrimental	bad, harmful, dangerous
develop	create, change, grow
deviate	stray, change, take a different path
diabetes	elevated sugar in the blood
diagnose	test, find out, figure out, learn cause
diagnosis	finding out the cause of an illness, condition, disease, medical answer
diarrhea diseases	diarrhea
difficulties	problems, trouble
dilate	become wider, become larger, become bigger
dilator	something used to make something become larger, wider, or bigger
dilute	weaken, make weaker, add liquid
dimension	size
diminish	make smaller, become less, take less
diminutive	small, tiny, very little
disclose	show, tell
discoid	shaped like a disk, round and flat

D

discoloration	change in color, not the color it normally is, odd color
discontinue	stop, end, quit
discuss	talk about, talk with
disease	illness, sickness
disguise	hide
display	show
dissemination (disseminate)	spread, distribute, send out, make available
distinguish	tell apart, set apart
distribute	hand out, give, spread
domicile	home, house
donate	to give
donation	gift, present
dose	amount of medicine, chemical, or radiation; amount, size
drowsy	sleepy
dust	fine, dry earth, powdery dirt
dwelling	home, house
dyspepsia	indigestion, heartburn

E

economical	cheap, low cost, low priced
effect	make, result
effective	works well, good, strong
efficacy rate	how well something works
EKG	heart test, test of your heart



electrolytes	blood salts, a type of necessary salt found in blood
elevate	raise, lift, make higher
eliminate	stop, end, drop, get rid of
emaciated	very thin, starving
embolism	blood clot
emphasize	stress, point out, highlight
emphysema	a lung disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
encephalitis	swelling of the brain
encephalopathy	brain dysfunction
endocrine	related to the hormone producing systems
enhance	add to, improve
environment	all the things around you in your daily life, at home and at work
environmental control	removing harmful things from your home and work; doing something to improve the space you live in and the air you breathe
epidemic	disease that most people get, widespread sickness
epidemiology	disease study
episode	event, set amount of time, attack, brief time
epizootic	widespread disease in animals
equilibrium	balance
equivalent of	equal to
erosions	small pits, small holes in teeth or bones
erythematosis	red rash on the face
escalate	worsen, make worse, get worse, increase, grow
ESR	a blood test

E

etiology	the cause of
evident	plain to see, visible, seen
exacerbate	worsen, make worse
excess rate	how many people become seriously sick during a pandemic
excessive	too much
exert	work hard, push, struggle, exercise
exertion	effort, work
exhale	breathe out
exhibit	show, display
expectorate	spit, cough, spit out
experience	feel, have, go through
expertise	knowledge, skill, know-how, training
exposure	around, been around, contact, come in contact with family history health information about your close relatives
extend	make longer

F

facilitate	make easier, help
factor	cause, reason
failed to	did not
fallacy	error, myth, not true
fast	go without any food or drink, not eat or drink anything
fatigue	tired, weak feeling of the whole body, feeling tired all over
feasible	possible, doable, workable, can be done, can do



febrile	caused by a fever, feverish
finalize	complete, end, finish, settle
flare	a period of time when symptoms of a disease are worse, when your disease hurts more than normal
flexible	moving easily, stretch easily, bend and stretch without hurting
fluctuate	change, rise and fall, go back and forth from high to low
fracture	break
frequently	often, commonly, normally, regularly, many times
fundamental	basic, real

G

gamete	sex cell, egg or sperm
generation time	time needed for disease to spread from one person to another
genetics	family traits, science or study of family traits or how traits (eye color, etc.) are passed from parent to child, study of blood relatives
glaucoma	eye disease, increased eye pressure; an eye disease that can lead to blindness
glucose	sugar, energy
gradually	slowly, over time
Guillain-Barre Syndrome	GBS; a disease that makes it hard to move

H

H5N1	bird flu virus
Haemophilus influenzae type b	Hib; a lung disease



homologous	similar, like, alike
hormone	chemical, natural or manmade chemical that effects your growth, chemicals that help different parts of your body know how they should work
host	person; animal
HPAI	a dangerous bird flu
HPV	a virus that can cause cervical cancer
humidify	to moisten air
hyperlipidemia	high cholesterol
hypertensive heart disease	high blood pressure
hypersensitivity	strong reaction
hypertension	high blood pressure
hyposensitivity	weak reaction
hypotension	low blood pressure
I	
identical	same, exactly the same
illness rate or clinical attack rate	number of sick people; (Use a ratio like “3 in every 10 New Yorkers are sick” or a percentage like “30 percent of all Floridians are sick.”)
illustrate	show, draw, picture
immediately	at once, right away
immerse	put completely in, completely cover
immune globulin	something in your blood that helps fight disease
immune	when your body can protect itself from a disease; protected from



immunity	the body's ability to keep from getting a disease; protection from disease, ability to fight off an illness
immunization	getting a vaccine (shot)
immunize	to protect against disease, usually by a shot
immunological	related to the immune system
immunosuppression	when your body can't fight disease
immunotherapy	medical treatment that helps your body fight off diseases
impede	get in the way, slow
imperative	important, pressing, urgent
imperceptible	hard to see, hidden
implement	start, begin
in excess of	more than
in the absence of	without
in the course of	during, in
in the event of	if
in vitro	out of the body, outside the body, laboratory grown, in a test tube
in vivo	within the body, inside the body grown inside animal
inaccuracy	error, mistake, chance that there is a mistake
inactive vaccine	a vaccine that uses germs that have been killed
inadvertently	without meaning to
inadvisable	risky, not smart, may be dangerous
inapparent infection	when you are sick but you don't feel bad
incidence	how many people get sick
incidence	number of sick people



incident of national significance	national emergency
incise	cut
incision	cut
incisors	front teeth, front “biting” teeth
inclement	harsh, extreme, dangerous
incorrect	wrong, not true, false
increase	add to, raise
incubation period	the length of time a disease is in someone’s body before they feel or look sick
indicate	suggest, point to
indication	sign, signal
indigenous	local to, comes from, native
individual	person, you, man, woman
inexpensive	cheap, low cost, low priced
infect	disease spread by germ or virus, to get sick, to make someone sick, to spread a disease
infection control	how to avoid sickness
infection	illness caused by germs, a sickness you get from germs
infectious agent	virus, germs, something that makes you sick, disease, flu, parasite
infectious	something that can spread disease
inflamm	make hot, red, or swollen; swollen
inflammation	swelling, injury, sore
Inflammatory Bowel Disease	digestive system disease, intestinal problems
influenza	flu



inform	tell
infusion	put fluids or drugs directly into your blood
ingestion	eating, drinking, swallowing
inhalation	breathing, breathing in
inhale	breathe in; take a breath
inhaler	breathing medicine/drug, asthma medicine
inherent	natural, built in, native
inherit	acquire, get, obtain, be left
inheritance	passing of traits (such as eye color) from parent to child
inhibit	check, bar, forbid, stop
initial	first, earliest, basic
injection	shot, to give medicine by needle, booster, dose
inquire	ask
instrument	tool
insufficient	not enough, too little, failing, poor
integrate	combine with, make part of
intention	goal, aim, desire, end
internal organs	inside parts of your body (heart, lungs, stomach, kidneys, etc.)
interrupt	stop, break
intrauterine device	IUD, birth control
intravenous (IV)	into your vein; into your blood stream, putting drugs or fluids directly into your blood
investigational vaccine	vaccine still being tested
irrefutable	certain, final, obvious, proven



irritable	sensitive, complaining, grouchy, testy
irritant	bother; pain, pest, problem
isolate	a specific type of virus; a specific type of flu
isolation of ill people	staying away from people who are sick; keeping sick people at home

J

jaundice	skin and eyes turn yellow
joint	place where two bones come together (knee, elbow, etc.)

K

kidney	kidney, organ that filters blood
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L

lacerate	cut, tear
laceration	cut, tear
ligament	a strong band of tissue that holds your joints together
live vaccine	a vaccine that has a weakened form of the virus in it
localized	in a small area, only in one place
locate	find, place, settle, turn up
location	place, spot
long-term	for a long time, over a long period of time
lower respiratory infection	pneumonia

L

lung function	measure of how strong your lungs are
lungs	breathing organs
lymphatic	related to the lymph system
lymphocytes	lymph cells

M

macrophage	disease-fighting cell
macular	a discolored spot on your skin
magnitude	extent, size, how serious
maintain	take care of, keep
mammogram	test to check the health of the breast
malignant	cancer
manage	control, direct, be in charge of, take care of, watch
manifest	clear, plain, evident
maximum	the largest possible, the most
medication	drug, pill, medicine
medicine	drug
memory cell	a cell that helps your body quickly fight diseases that you've gotten before
menopause	women's "change of life", the change, time in a woman's life when her periods stops
mentality	frame of mind, mind, outlook, feeling
metabolism	process of getting energy from food, converting food into energy
mg	milligram
microbes	very tiny fungi, sometimes viruses, that are too small to see; bacteria, protozoa



migrate	move, travel
migration	moving from one place to another
mild	gentle, not severe, slight, small
mildew	fungus that grow in damp warm areas
minimal	least, small, smallest
minimize	make smaller
miniscule	very small, tiny
mites	very tiny, spider-like, animals that cause allergies and skin rashes
mitigate	make less harmful, soften, lessen, reduce
mobility	ability to move
moderate	medium, mild, controllable
modify	change
molars	back teeth, back “grinding” teeth
mold	growth on food and damp surfaces
monitor	watch, check on, watch for changes, device that measures changes
morbidity	diseased, sick, ill
mortality rate	number of deaths
mortality	death
motor vehicle accident	car crash
MRSA	bacteria that is resistant to antibiotics
mucosal (mucus) membranes	soft, moist areas just inside the openings to your body
mucus	fluid that coats and protects the inside of the nose, mouth, bronchial tubes and other parts of the body
multiple sclerosis	central nervous system disease

M

muscle contraction	muscle twitch, movement
mutagen	cause
mutation	change over time
mutation	change; difference; different

N

narcotic	addictive pain medicine, drug
nebulizer	machine that turns liquid asthma medicine into mist
negligent	careless, lax, not careful
neonatal death	infant death, death in the first seven days of life
neonatal	newborn
nephrology	study of kidney problems
neuraminidase	enzyme on the surface of the virus
neuritis	swelling of a nerve
neurologic	relating to the nervous system, brain or spinal cord
neurological	related to the brain and nervous system
neurology	study of the nervous system
neuropathy	disease of the nervous system
neutralize	cancel, stop, offset
nominal	small, not important, token, cheap, not costly
nonpharmaceutical intervention	ways to stop the spread of illness without drugs, such as hand washing, covering sneezes, closing schools, etc.
nosocomial	an infection you can catch in the hospital
notification	notice



nutrition	food, meal, diet, healthy food
nutritious	wholesome, food that is good for you, healthy eating, healthy food
O	
objective	goal, end
obscure	hidden, unclear, blur, confuse
observation	close look, remark, watching, sighting
observe	look closely, watch, see, detect, find, notice, see
obstruct	block, stop
obstruction	barrier, block, hurdle
obtain	get
obvious	clear, plain, easy to see
occasionally	sometimes, not often, once in a while
occupation	job, work
occupational therapist	someone who helps people who are sick or injured relearn everyday activities
occupational therapy	therapy that helps you relearn everyday activities
occur	happen, take place, result
occurrence	event
on an empty stomach	do not eat or drink
optic neuritis	eye disease, disease of the eyes
optimal	best, best way
option	choice, way
orchitis	side effect of mumps
originate	start, begin, create



orthopedic surgeon	bones and joint doctor
orthopedics	bones and joint doctor's office
osteonecrosis	bone death
osteoporosis	osteoporosis, brittle bones
otitis media	middle ear infection
outbreak	when a large number of people suddenly get sick; sudden increase in number of sicknesses
ova/ovum	egg/eggs, a woman's egg/eggs
overabundance	too much, excess
P	
palatable	pleasing, tasty, good
pandemic flu	pandemic flu, deadly flu, fast and wide-spread flu
pandemic vaccine	pandemic flu vaccine
panzootic	a flu pandemic in animals, a deadly flu pandemic in animals, fast and wide-spread flu in animals
papule	small red dot on your skin, skin rash
paralysis	can't move
parameter	limit, factor, value
parasite	animal or plant living off another animal or plant
participate	take part, join, share
passive immunity	disease protection from either mother or vaccine
pathogen	germ, virus, disease-causing agent
pathogenic	disease causing
peak flow meter	small tool used to measure how fast you can blow out air
peak flow	the fastest you can blow out air



pending	coming, until, waiting on something or someone
perforation	hole
perform	do, carry out, act
pericarditis	heart inflammation, swelling of the tissue covering the heart
perinatal death	death before birth, stillborn
periphery	edge, boundary
peritoneum	lining of your stomach, belly, tummy
permanent	lasting, long term, forever
permit	allow, let
persevere	hold on, keep at, last, keep trying, not give up
persistent	there all the time, constant, doesn't go away, not giving up
personal protective equipment (PPE)	gowns, face shields, gloves, face masks, and respirators
personnel	people, staff
perspire	sweat
persuade	convince, talk into, win over, urge
pertinent	fitting, important
petechiae	tiny red or purple spot on your skin, skin rash
pharmacist	druggist, drug dispenser
photosensitive	sun-sensitive
physical examination	check-up, doctor's appointment
physical therapist	someone who treats pain and weakness by exercise
physical therapy	treatment of pain and weakness through exercise
physician	doctor

P

pica	craving, dirt or clay eating, unusual appetite
pigmentation	color
placebo	sugar pill
platelet	blood clotting cell
pleurisy	lung inflammation
pneumonia	lung infection
podiatry	the medical department that treats problems with feet, medical specialty – feet, foot doctor
poliomyelitis	polio; a disease that can make you unable to move
pollute	dirty, poison, taint, spoil
polysaccharide vaccines	sugar vaccines
polyurethane	plastic
portion	piece, amount, part, serving
position	job, rank, class, grade
possess	have, own
post-exposure prophylaxis	drug given to someone who has been near someone sick, prevention drug, drugs to prevent the spread of disease
postpone	put off, wait, delay
potency	strength, force, power, level, dose
precaution	safeguard, caution, guard, care
predicament	problem, bad situation, plight, difficulty
preliminary	early, not final, initial
pre-pandemic vaccine	pandemic flu or deadly flu vaccine; shot
preparedness	readiness, alertness, to be ready, to prepare, be prepared
prerogative	right



prescription	doctors orders, medicine, drug order
present	give, send, now, show
prevalence	number of sick people
prevalence	spread, disease spread, number, figure
prevent	stop, keep from happening, forbid, keep, hinder
prevention	stop, bar, avoid
primary teeth	baby teeth
principal	main, first, head, chief, most important
probability	chance, likelihood
procedure	steps, method, course of action, how-to, way
proceed	go, move forward
prodromal	signs of disease or attack
proficient	skilled, experienced, able
progression	move forward, go on, get worse, advance
prohibit	ban, forbid, prevent
projectile	object moving with great force and speed, as in “projectile vomit”
proliferate	grow, spread, reproduce
prophylactic	drugs given to prevent sickness or pregnancy, birth control, condom
prophylaxis	prevention drugs, remedy, curative
prostate	gland in male body that makes sperm
prostatitis	infection of the prostate
protocol	method, standard, step-by-step process
protocol	rules, code
provide	give, offer, send, supply

P

provoke	make worse, cause, anger, annoy
psoriasis	a dry, scaly, skin rash
psoriatic arthritis	joint swelling disease with skin rash
psychiatrist	mental health doctor, shrink
psychiatry	study of mental health
PSA test	a test to check the health of the prostate
PTSD	an anxiety problem after seeing or having a traumatic event
public health	everyone's health, our health, health of the community as a whole
puff	a short, gentle burst; a small breath
pulmonary	related to the lungs
pulmonary cancer	cancer of lung, trachea, bronchus
pulmonary care unit	lung disease treatment area of hospital
pulmonary fibrosis	lung disease, scarring of lung tissue, shortness of breath
pulmonologist	lung doctor
pulmonology	study of lung disease
purchase	buy

Q

qualified	suited, capable
quarantine	isolate, staying away from other people, staying home by yourself

R

RA	rheumatoid arthritis, disease of joints
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radiation	see ionizing radiation and non-ionizing radiation
radioisotope	medicine, special medicine, drug or radioactive tracer
radiologist	a doctor who studies x-rays and other images, x-ray specialist
radiologist	x-ray doctor, a doctor who studies x-ray and other images
radiology	x-ray department
radionuclide	medicine, special medicine or drug
rampant	unchecked, raging, uncontrolled
rapid diagnostic test	fast result test to see if someone is sick
rationale	reason, thinking, intent, purpose
Raynaud's syndrome	circulatory disease
reaction	a response
reassortment	change, new type of virus
receive	get, admit, welcome
recipient	person who gets something
recognize	accept, know, see, find
recombinant	new gene combination
recover	get better, feel better, heal
recrudescence	when someone who seemed better gets sick again, relapse
recuperate	get better, feel better, get well, recover
recur	come back, get again, happen again
reduce	lower, cut, trim, dilute
redundant	extra, not needed, excess, surplus, spare
regarding	about

R

regimen	diet, plan, program
register	sign up, sign in
regular	usual, normal, everyday, common
regulate	control, restrict, watch over, govern
regulation	rule, law
rehabilitate	get better, restore
reimburse	pay back, refund
reinforce	make stronger, brace, support
reiterate	repeat, say again
relief	feel better, ease, not as bad, ease or lessening from pain or discomfort
relieve	ease, make better, soothe, rest
remission	period of time when a disease is not active
renal	related to the kidney
request	ask for, beg
require	need, ask for
requirements	needs, regulations
rescind	cancel, take away
resemble	look like, take after, match
reside	be in, live in
residence	home, apartment, house
Residual Seizure Disorder	seizures, sudden attack, brain problem
respiration	breathing
respiratory therapist	breathing therapist
respite	rest, relief



respond	answer
restrain	hold back, stop
retain	keep
retrieve	get, bring back, get back
reveal	show, tell
review	go over, check
Reye's Syndrome	brain disease in children
rheumatoid arthritis	disease of joints, joint swelling
rheumatologist	joint, bone, and immune system doctor
rheumatology	study of the immune system, joints, and bones
risk reduction	reducing the chance of something (usually negative) happening
risk	chance
Rotavirus	germ causing stomach flu
Rubella	German measles
Rubeola	measles
rupture	break, burst, break open

S

sanitary	clean, germ free, healthful
sanitize	clean, wash, clean up, make germ-free, disinfect
Scarlatina	scarlet fever
schedule	plan, planning a time to do something
seasonal influenza	common flu; winter flu
second- and third-order effects	things that happen as a result of your actions

S

sector	group, community, neighborhood
segment	part, piece
seizure	fit of uncontrolled movements
sensation	feeling
sensitive	easily hurt, easy to damage, sore
seroconversion	when your body starts to make cells to fight a disease, way your body fights against disease
serology	study of blood strength
serosurvey	test to see how likely you are to get a disease
severe	strong, serious, harmful, dangerous, very bad
severity	how bad
shift	change
shortness of breath	difficulty catching breath, difficult breathing
side effect	reaction, reaction to a medicine
significant	big, serious, important
similar	like
situated	placed, located
Sjogren's syndrome	dry eyes and mouth
skull	bones of head that protect the brain
social distancing	stay at home; keep away from people
socialize	make friends, talk with people, meet people
solicit	ask for
soreness	hurt, pain, ache
spasm	sudden, strong muscle tightening, jerk, painful twist
species	group of plants or animals, same type, alike



spirometer	breathing test, machine used to measure breath strength, breath strength tool indicator
spontaneous	unplanned, sudden
stable	ok, no change, constant, even, unchanging
stamina	strength, endurance
state of readiness	ready, now ready, prepared
state	say, tell, condition
status	state, condition
steroid	medicine, drug to lessen swelling, illegal sports drugs
stigma	mark, spot, blemish, embarrassment
stimulate	excite, stir up, activate
strain	specific type of plant or animal or germ
stress	physical, mental or emotional tension or strain
stringent	strict, tight, controlled
subclinical infection	minor illness
submit	give, hand in, send
subsequent	following, next, later
subsequently	after that, later, afterward
substance	chemical, material, matter, stuff
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome	SIDS; crib death; sudden, unexplained death of a baby
suffice	be enough
sufficient	enough, plenty, ample
suffocate	choke, smother
summon	call for

S

sun protection factor	sunscreen, sun block
superficial	not important, not harmful, slight
supersede	replace, take the place of
supplement	add to, in addition to, additive, vitamins
supply	give, budget, fund, pool, source, kitty
suppress	hold back, stop, slow down
surge capacity	being able to offer more services in an emergency, ability to expand
surgery	operation
surgical mask	face mask, mask
surveillance	keep a close eye on, watch closely, monitor
susceptible	more open to, in danger of getting, likely to get
sutures	stitches
symptom	sign (of disease or sickness)
syndrome	illness, sickness, set of signs that often go together
synthesize	combine, form, summarize
systematic	planned out, orderly, regular
Systemic Lupus Erythematosus	immune system disease
systemic	throughout your body, in all parts of your body

T

taper	reduce, slow, lower, shrink, decrease
telework	work from home
temporal association	when two things happen at the same time but aren't actually related to each other
temporary	short, brief



teratogenic	something that can hurt your baby before he is born
terminal	deadly, fatal
terminate	stop, end
tetanus	disease affecting muscles
therapeutic	healing, improving, getting better
therapy	treatment
therefore	so
thimerosal	drug or vaccine preservative
time period	time
titer	blood test
titrate	to change the dose/level of a medicine
topical	on the surface, on the skin, on the body
toxicology	study of harmful materials
transform	change, alter
transparent	clear, see-through
transpire	happen, take place
transverse myelitis	of the spine, back disease
traumatic	shocking, upsetting
treat	give care, take care of, cure, heal
treatment	action, medicine, therapy
tremor	shaking, trembling
trigger	cause, starts, something that can bring on symptoms of a disease
tuberculosis	TB, a disease of the lungs that can make you cough nucus
tumor	growth, lump



U

ulcer	open sore
ulterior	secondary, hidden, alternate, further
ultimate	final, last
unfavorable	bad, harmful, damaging, unwanted
unnecessary	not needed, needless
upper respiratory system	nose, throat, and windpipe
urinate	pee
urticaria	hives, itch, rash on your skin
uterus	womb
utilize	use, make use of
UVA	UV light, sunlight
UVB	UV light, sunlight

V

Vaccinate	to protect against disease, usually by a shot
Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System	VAERS, a way for doctors to make sure that vaccines aren't hurting anyone
Vaccine Safety Datalink Project	VSD, a way for doctors to learn more about vaccines
vaccine	shot, flu shot, medicine
vague	unclear, not for sure, not certain
validate	prove, test
validity	truth, proof



variant	version, slightly different
Varicella	chicken pox
variola	smallpox
vary	change, shift
vehicle	car, truck, bus
verbatim	exact, word for word
verify	check, find out
vesicular	blisters, small bumps on your skin
viable	able to live, usable, can be used
vicinity	area, location
viral shedding	coughing and sneezing
viremia	viruses in the blood
virulence	strength; measure of how dangerous the disease is
virulent	strong, dangerous
virus	virus
voluminous	large, bulky
voluntary	voluntary, done without being forced
vomit	throw up

W

waning immunity	loss of resistance against a disease
warning sign	signals to alert you something may be wrong
waterfowl	water birds; birds that live on water; ducks, geese, and swans
wheeze	to breathe with difficulty making a whistling sound

W

whereas

while, but

whooping cough

disease of the lungs that is very easily spread to others

withhold

deny, keep from, hold back, refuse

withstand

take, bear, resist

witness

see, note, observe

X

x-ray

a picture of the bones and other parts inside of the body

Y

Z

zoonoses

diseases that people can get from animals; diseases that are passed between animals and people