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Introduction to Anatomy: *Anatomical Terminology*

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When you first start studying Anatomy, it can feel a lot like trying to learn a new language – you will be introduced to many new words and concepts that can seem very complicated, confusing, and difficult to pronounce.

Many of the words used in Anatomy are based in ancient Latin and Greek languages. These words follow simple rules, which anyone can learn. Each word is made up of basic prefixes, suffixes, and roots that can be combined to form words. The good news: by learning these word elements, you can come to understand what anatomical words mean!

The goal of this tutorial is to teach you some commonly used in prefixes, suffixes, and roots, in order to help make learning Anatomy a little easier. Anatomical examples will help you to start learning new words right away. In some cases, everyday word examples have been included to help improve your understanding; in others, this section has been left blank so that you can look for your own examples.

You can test your learning with the quizzes at the end of this tutorial.

Good luck!

Navigation

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- 1) Scroll through the PDF*
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Prefixes that describe location (1 of 2):

Prefix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Ante-	In front of	Antebrachial <i>(In front of + Arm + Pertaining to)</i>	Antechamber <i>(In front of + Room)</i>
Endo-	Inside, within	Endometrium <i>(Inside + Womb)</i>	Endorphins <i>(Inside + Make + Morphine)</i>
Epi-	Above, on, over	Epidermis <i>(Above + Skin)</i>	Epidemic <i>(Upon + The People)</i>
Exo-	Out, outside	Exocrine gland <i>(Outside + sift) gland</i>	Exoskeleton <i>(Outside + Skeleton)</i>
Extra-	Beyond, outside	Extracellular <i>(Outside + Cell+ Pertaining to)</i>	Extraordinary <i>(Outside + Normal)</i>
Hypo-	Under	Hypothalamus <i>(Under + Thalamus)</i>	Hypocrisy <i>(Under + Decide)</i>
Infra-	Beneath, Below	Infraspinatus muscle <i>(Below + Spine) muscle</i>	Infrared <i>(Below + Red)</i>
Inter-	Between	Interneuron <i>(Between + Neuron)</i>	International <i>(Between + Nations)</i>

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Prefixes that describe location (2 of 2):

Prefix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Intra-	Inside, within	Intravenous <i>(Inside + Vein + Pertaining to)</i>	Intramural <i>(Within + Wall)</i>
Juxta-	Beside	Juxtaglomerular cell <i>(Beside + Ball of thread*) cell</i> <small>* = glomerulus (kidneys)</small>	Juxtaposition <i>(Beside + Position)</i>
Para-	Beside, beyond	Parathyroid gland <i>(Beside + Thyroid) gland</i>	Paramedic <i>(Beside + Medic)</i>
Peri-	Around	Pericardium <i>(Around + Heart + Pertaining to)</i>	Perimeter <i>(Around + Measure)</i>
Retro-	Behind	Retroperitoneal <i>(Behind + Stretched around)</i>	Retroactive <i>(Behind + Done)</i>
Sub-	Beneath, under	Subscapularis muscle <i>(Under + Spine) muscle</i>	Submarine <i>(Below + Sea)</i>
Supra-	Above, upon	Supraorbital <i>(Above + Eye + Pertaining to)</i>	Supranational <i>(Above + Nation)</i>
Trans-	Across, through	Transverse plane <i>(Across + Turn) plane</i>	Transatlantic <i>(Across + Atlantic)</i>

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Prefixes that describe number:

Prefix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Hemi-	Half	Hemi-diaphragm <i>(Half + Diaphragm)</i>	Hemisphere <i>(Half + Circle)</i>
Semi-	Half	Semitendinosus muscle <i>(Half + Tendon) muscle</i>	Semicircle <i>(Half + Circle)</i>
Mono-	One, single	Monocyte <i>(One + Cell)</i>	Monotone <i>(One + Pitch)</i>
Uni-	One	Unicellular <i>(One + Cell + Pertaining to)</i>	Unicycle <i>(One + Wheel)</i>
Bi-	Two, double	Bilateral <i>(Two + Side)</i>	Bicycle <i>(Two + Wheel)</i>
Di-	Two, double	Digastric muscle <i>(Two + Belly + Pertaining to) m.</i>	Diploid <i>(Double)</i>
Tri-	Three	Triceps muscle <i>(Three + Head) muscle</i>	Tricycle <i>(Three + Wheel)</i>
Quad-	Four	Quadriceps muscle <i>(Four + Head) muscle</i>	Quadrilateral <i>(Four + Side)</i>

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Prefixes that describe colour:

Prefix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Alb-	White	Linea alba <i>(White + Line)</i>	Albinism <i>(White + Condition of)</i>
Cirrh(o)-	Yellow	Cirrhosis <i>(Yellow + Condition)</i>	
Cyan(o)-	Blue	Cyanosis <i>(Blue + Condition)</i>	
Erythr(o)-	Red	Erythrocyte <i>(Red + Cell)</i>	
Glauc(o)-	Silver	Glaucoma <i>(Silver + Tumour)</i>	
Leut-	Yellow	Corpus Luteum <i>(Body + Yellow)</i>	
Melan(o)-	Black	Melanocyte <i>(Black + Cell)</i>	
Xanth(o)-	Yellow	Xanthoma <i>(Yellow + Tumour)</i>	

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Roots that describe tissues, or organs (1 of 2):

Root	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Abdomin(o)-	Abdomen	Abdominal <i>(Abdomen + Pertaining to)</i>	
Arthr(o)-	Joint	Arthritis <i>(Joint + Inflammation)</i>	
Brachi-	Arm	Biceps brachii muscle <i>(Two + Head) (Arm) muscle</i>	
Cardi(o)-	Heart	Cardiac <i>(Heart + Pertaining to)</i>	
Crani(o)-	Skull	Cranial <i>(Skull + Pertaining to)</i>	
Cutane(o)-	Skin	Subcutaneous <i>(Below + Skin + Pertaining to)</i>	
Cyt(o)-	Cell	Cytotoxic <i>(Cell + Toxic)</i>	
Derm-	Skin	Subdermal <i>(Beneath + Skin + Pertaining to)</i>	

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Roots that describe cells, tissues, or organs (2 of 2):

Root	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
Gastr(o)-	Stomach, Belly	Epigastric <i>(Above + Stomach)</i>	
Hepat(o)-	Liver	Hepatocyte <i>(Liver + Cell)</i>	
Myo-	Muscle	Myocyte <i>(Muscle + Cell)</i>	
Nephr(o)-	Kidney	Nephrogenic <i>(Kidney + Originating from)</i>	
Neur(o)-	Nerve	Neuromuscular <i>(Nerve + Muscle)</i>	
Ocul(o)-	Eye	Ocular nerve <i>(Eye + Pertaining to) nerve</i>	
Oste(o)-	Bone	Osteocyte <i>(Bone + Cell)</i>	
Pulm(o)-	Lung	Pulmonary <i>(Lung + Pertaining to)</i>	

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Suffixes that modify root words:

Suffix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
-ac	Pertaining to	Cardiac <i>(Heart + Pertaining to)</i>	
-al	Pertaining to	Antebrachial <i>(In front of + Arm + Pertaining to)</i>	
-ary	Pertaining to	Pulmonary <i>(Lung + Pertaining to)</i>	
-eal	Pertaining to	Esophageal <i>(Esophagus + Pertaining to)</i>	
-ic	Pertaining to	Gastric <i>(Stomach + Pertaining to)</i>	
-ical	Pertaining to	Neurological <i>(Nerves + Pertaining to)</i>	
-ory	Pertaining to	Auditory <i>(Hear + Pertaining to)</i>	
-ous	Pertaining to	Venous <i>(Vein + Pertaining to)</i>	

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Suffixes that modify root words:

Suffix	Meaning	Anatomical Example	Everyday Example
-genic	Originating, Produced in/from	<i>Hepatogenic</i> (Liver + Produced in)	
-iole	Small	Arteriole (Small + Artery)	
-itis	Inflammation	Gastritis (Stomach + Inflammation)	
-megaly	Enlargement	Hepatomegaly (Liver + Enlargement)	
-oma	Tumour	Lipoma (Fat + Tumour)	
-osis	Condition	Cyanosis (Blue + Condition)	
-penia	Decrease in	Osteopenia (Bone + Decrease in)	
-ule	Small	Venule (Vein + Small)	

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Quiz 1

Match the locational prefixes with their correct definitions:

(Write your answers on paper and check with the Quiz Answer Key)

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. Hypo- | A. Across |
| 2. Infra- | B. In front of |
| 3. Juxta- | C. Beneath |
| 4. Peri- | D. Above |
| 5. Trans- | E. Beside |
| 6. Sub- | F. Beside |
| 7. Endo- | G. Between |
| 8. Supra- | H. Above |
| 9. Ante- | I. Under |
| 10. Epi- | J. Inside |
| 11. Inter- | K. Under |
| 12. Para- | L. Around |

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Quiz 2

Break down the following anatomical terms into their components:

(Write your answers on paper and check with the Quiz Answer Key)

Example: Suprasternal = Above + Sternum + Pertaining to

1. Cardiac
2. Epigastric
3. Cyanosis
4. Subdermal
5. Antebrachial
6. Venule
7. Biceps brachii muscle
8. Hemi-diaphragm
9. Monocyte
10. Linea alba
11. Pericardial
12. Osteopenia

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Quiz 3

Write the anatomical terms the correspond to the following definitions:

(Write your answers on a piece of paper and check with the Quiz Answer Key)

Example: One + Cell + Pertaining to = Unicellular

1. Half + Tendon (muscle)
2. Red + Cell
3. Above + Eye + Pertaining to
4. Liver + Enlargement
5. Three + Head (muscle)
6. Two + Belly + Pertaining to (muscle)
7. Muscle + Cell
8. Below + Skin
9. Behind + Sternum + Pertaining to
10. Joint + Inflammation
11. Under + Stomach + Pertaining to
12. Yellow + Body

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1.	Hypo-	I. or K.	Under
2.	Infra-	C.	Beneath
3.	Juxta-	E. or F.	Beside
4.	Peri-	L.	Around
5.	Trans-	A.	Across
6.	Sub-	I. or K.	Under
7.	Endo-	J.	Inside
8.	Supra-	D. or H.	Above
9.	Ante-	B.	In front of
10.	Epi-	D. or H.	Above
11.	Inter-	G.	Between
12.	Para-	E. or F.	Beside

Quiz 2	
1.	Heart + Pertaining to
2.	Above + Stomach + Pertaining to
3.	Blue + Condition
4.	Below + Skin + Pertaining to
5.	In front of + Arm + Pertaining to
6.	Small + Vein
7.	(Two + Head) Arm (muscle)
8.	Half + Diaphragm
9.	One + Cell
10.	Line + White
11.	Around + Heart + Pertaining to
12.	Bone + Decrease in

Quiz 3	
1.	Semitendinosus (muscle)
2.	Erythrocyte
3.	Supraorbital
4.	Hepatomegaly
5.	Triceps (muscle)
6.	Digastric (muscle)
7.	Myocyte
8.	Subdermal or Subcutaneous
9.	Retrosternal (new word)
10.	Arthritis (new word)
11.	Hypogastric (new word)
12.	Corpus luteum

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Created for UBC MDUP FLEX 419, Spring 2019

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Inspired by the EPHE 141 Human Anatomy Lab, and the EPHE 141 Lab Manual (School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, University of Victoria)

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Medical Illustration(Slide 1)

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