Medical Terminology for Coders

A Step by Step Beginner Workbook

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This student workbook teaches medical words from the ground up and connects terminology to anatomy, documentation, ICD-10-CM, CPT, and HCPCS Level II. No prior coding experience is required.

Student Edition

How to Use This Book

Medical terminology becomes easier when you stop trying to memorize whole words and learn how each word is built. Work through the chapters in order, say the terms aloud, write the word parts by hand, and connect every term to a body system. Then use the practice exercises to explain the words in plain language.

1. Read the chapter explanation before studying the tables.
2. Cover the meaning column and test yourself on each term.
3. Break unfamiliar words into prefix, root or combining form, and suffix.
4. Identify the body system and exact structure involved.
5. Decide whether the word describes a diagnosis, symptom, test, or procedure.
6. Use the current ICD-10-CM, CPT, or HCPCS Level II book when the exercise directs you to practice a lookup.
7. Keep an error log of words you confuse and review them within forty-eight hours.

Important Coding Reminder

Terminology helps you understand documentation, but it does not replace the official coding guidelines, complete code descriptors, payer rules, or provider documentation. Never assign a code from a word part alone. Use the proper Index and verify the final code in the main code section.

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Medical Word Building

Most medical words contain one or more roots plus a prefix, suffix, or combining vowel. The safest method is to identify the ending first, find the body-part root, and then add the meaning of the prefix.

The Parts of a Medical Word

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
Prefix	Appears at the beginning and changes the meaning	Hyperglycemia begins with hyper meaning excessive or above normal
Root	Provides the core meaning, often a body part	Cardi refers to the heart
Combining vowel	Usually o and helps connect word parts	Cardi plus o forms cardi o
Combining form	A root plus combining vowel	Nephr o refers to the kidney
Suffix	Appears at the end and often identifies the condition or procedure	Ectomy means surgical removal

Step by Step Word Method

8. Start with the suffix. Decide whether the word describes inflammation, pain, enlargement, removal, repair, visual examination, or another concept.
9. Find the root or combining form. Identify the organ, tissue, body system, or substance.
10. Look for a prefix. Determine whether it changes location, number, speed, amount, or time.
11. Ignore the combining vowel when translating the meaning.
12. Put the parts together in natural English.
13. Confirm the meaning from the documentation or a reliable medical dictionary before coding.

Worked Word Breakdowns

Word	Word parts	Plain meaning
Cardiomegaly	cardi o plus megaly	Enlargement of the heart
Nephrectomy	nephr plus ectomy	Surgical removal of a kidney
Pericarditis	peri plus cardi plus itis	Inflammation around the heart
Hypoglycemia	hypo plus glyc plus emia	Low sugar in the blood

Word	Word parts	Plain meaning
Arthroscopy	arthr o plus scopy	Visual examination of a joint
Tachypnea	tachy plus pnea	Abnormally rapid breathing

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

14. Separate gastrectomy into its root and suffix, then write the plain meaning.
15. Separate dermatitis into its root and suffix.
16. Separate bradycardia into its prefix, root, and suffix.
17. Explain the difference between an -ectomy, an -otomy, and an -ostomy.
18. Create five medical words by combining a root from this chapter with a suffix from Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

Prefixes

Prefixes tell you where, when, how many, how fast, or how much. A prefix can completely change the meaning of a medical term.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
a an	without or not	apnea means absence of breathing
ab	away from	abduction moves away from the midline
ad	toward	adduction moves toward the midline
ante	before or in front of	antepartum means before delivery
anti	against	anticoagulant works against clotting
bi	two	bilateral means both sides
brady	slow	bradycardia means slow heart rate
contra	against or opposite	contraindication is a reason not to use a treatment
dys	difficult painful or abnormal	dysphagia means difficulty swallowing
endo	within	endoscopy examines inside
epi	upon or above	epidermis is the outer skin layer
hemi	half	hemiplegia affects one side
hyper	above normal or excessive	hypertension means high blood pressure
hypo	below normal or deficient	hypothyroidism means reduced thyroid activity
inter	between	intercostal means between ribs
intra	within	intravenous means within a vein
macro	large	macrocyte is a large cell
micro	small	microscope views small structures
mono	one	monocyte is one type of white blood cell

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
multi poly	many	polyuria means excessive urination
neo	new	neoplasm means new growth
peri	around	pericardium is around the heart
post	after	postoperative means after surgery
pre	before	preoperative means before surgery
sub	below or under	subcutaneous means under the skin
supra	above	suprapubic means above the pubic area
tachy	fast	tachypnea means rapid breathing
trans	across or through	transdermal means through the skin
tri	three	tricuspid means having three cusps
uni	one	unilateral means one side

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

19. Write the opposite prefix for hyper, brady, and pre.
20. Explain the difference between intercostal and intracostal.
21. Use the prefixes uni, bi, and tri in three medical terms.
22. Underline the prefix in ten terms from a sample patient note.
23. Create flash cards for every prefix you could not define without looking.

CHAPTER 3

Suffixes

Suffixes frequently identify what happened to the body part. Learn condition suffixes separately from diagnostic and surgical procedure suffixes.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
algia dynia	pain	neuralgia means nerve pain
cele	hernia or protrusion	cystocele is bladder protrusion
cyte	cell	leukocyte is a white blood cell
emia	blood condition	anemia is a blood condition involving reduced red cells or hemoglobin
iasis	abnormal condition or formation	nephrolithiasis is a kidney stone condition
itis	inflammation	arthritis is joint inflammation
lysis	breakdown destruction or separation	hemolysis is breakdown of red blood cells
megaly	enlargement	hepatomegaly is enlarged liver
oma	tumor mass or swelling	lipoma is a fatty tumor
osis	abnormal condition	cyanosis is bluish discoloration
pathy	disease	neuropathy is nerve disease
penia	deficiency	leukopenia is a low white blood cell count
plegia	paralysis	paraplegia is paralysis affecting the lower body
pnea	breathing	dyspnea is difficult breathing
rrhea	flow or discharge	diarrhea describes frequent loose stool discharge
sclerosis	hardening	arteriosclerosis is arterial hardening
stenosis	narrowing	spinal stenosis is narrowing of the spinal canal
ectomy	surgical removal	appendectomy removes the appendix

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
centesis	surgical puncture	thoracentesis punctures the chest cavity to remove fluid
desis	binding or fusion	arthrodesis fuses a joint
gram	record or image	mammogram is a breast image
graphy	process of recording or imaging	angiography images vessels
meter	instrument for measuring	spirometer measures breathing volumes
metry	process of measuring	spirometry measures lung function
otomy	incision into	tracheotomy is an incision into the trachea
ostomy	creation of an opening	colostomy creates an opening from the colon
pexy	surgical fixation	nephropexy fixes a kidney in position
plasty	surgical repair	rhinoplasty repairs or reshapes the nose
scopy	visual examination	colonoscopy visually examines the colon
tripsy	crushing	lithotripsy crushes stones

Do Not Confuse These Endings

- Ectomy removes a structure. Otomy cuts into it. Ostomy creates an opening.
- Gram is the record or image. Graphy is the process of recording or imaging.
- Meter is an instrument. Metry is the process of measuring.
- Plasty repairs. Pexy fixes in place. Desis binds or fuses.

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

24. Define hysterectomy, hysterotomy, and hysteroscopy without using a dictionary.
25. Explain why cardiomegaly and cardiomyopathy do not mean the same thing.
26. Create a four-column chart for -gram, -graphy, -meter, and -metry.

27. Find five suffixes in an operative report and classify them as condition, diagnostic, or surgical.
28. Write ten terms using suffixes from this chapter and translate each into plain English.

CHAPTER 4

Directional and Positional Language

Anatomical language identifies an exact location. Coding choices often change because of side, depth, direction, quadrant, or distance from the point of attachment.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
Anterior ventral	toward the front	the sternum is anterior to the heart
Posterior dorsal	toward the back	the spine is posterior to the sternum
Superior cephalad	above or toward the head	the head is superior to the chest
Inferior caudal	below or toward the feet	the stomach is inferior to the heart
Medial	toward the midline	the nose is medial to the eyes
Lateral	away from the midline	the ears are lateral to the eyes
Proximal	closer to the attachment point	the elbow is proximal to the wrist
Distal	farther from the attachment point	the fingers are distal to the elbow
Superficial	near the body surface	the skin is superficial to muscle
Deep	farther from the surface	bone is deep to skin
Ipsilateral	on the same side	right arm and right leg are ipsilateral
Contralateral	on opposite sides	right arm and left leg are contralateral
Bilateral	both sides	bilateral knees means both knees
Unilateral	one side	unilateral weakness affects one side
Palmar	palm side of the hand	palmar surface
Plantar	sole of the foot	plantar surface
Supine	lying face up	patient in supine position
Prone	lying face down	patient in prone position

Body Planes and Cavities

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
Sagittal plane	divides right and left portions	midsagittal creates equal halves
Coronal plane	divides front and back portions	also called frontal plane
Transverse plane	divides upper and lower portions	also called horizontal plane
Cranial cavity	contains the brain	part of the dorsal cavity
Thoracic cavity	contains heart and lungs	above the diaphragm
Abdominal cavity	contains many digestive organs	below the diaphragm
Pelvic cavity	contains bladder and reproductive structures	inferior to abdominal cavity

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

29. Describe the relationship between the knee and ankle using proximal and distal.
30. Describe the relationship between the heart and lungs using medial and lateral.
31. Draw the sagittal, coronal, and transverse planes on a simple body outline.
32. Write the correct term for lying face up and lying face down.
33. Find laterality and location words in five sample notes.

CHAPTER 5

Integumentary and Musculoskeletal Terms

These systems appear throughout diagnosis and procedure coding. Focus on the exact tissue, bone, joint, muscle, tendon, ligament, and type of injury or treatment.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
dermat o	skin	dermatitis
cutane o	skin	subcutaneous
kerat o	hard or horny tissue	keratosis
melan o	black or dark pigment	melanoma
onych o	nail	onychomycosis
pil o trich o	hair	trichology
adip o lip o	fat	lipoma
oste o	bone	osteoporosis
arthr o	joint	arthritis
chondr o	cartilage	chondromalacia
my o	muscle	myalgia
ten o tendin o	tendon	tendinitis
ligament o	ligament	ligamentous injury
burs o	bursa	bursitis
fasci o	fascia	fasciitis
spondyl o	vertebra	spondylosis
crani o	skull	craniotomy
cost o	rib	intercostal
fracture	break in bone	may be open or closed
sprain	ligament injury	joint ligament damage
strain	muscle or tendon injury	overstretch or tear
dislocation	bone displaced from joint	shoulder dislocation
lesion	area of abnormal tissue	skin lesion

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
debridement	removal of devitalized tissue	wound debridement

Coding Connection

- Skin coding may depend on lesion type, anatomical site, size, number, and method.
- Fracture coding may depend on bone, exact portion, side, open or closed status, displacement, encounter, and healing.
- Wound repair may depend on complexity, anatomical grouping, and total length.
- Musculoskeletal procedures require exact knowledge of the bone, joint, tendon, ligament, or muscle treated.

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

34. Explain the difference between a sprain and a strain.
35. Break osteoarthritis, myopathy, and chondromalacia into word parts.
36. Label ten major bones and ten major joints on a diagram.
37. From a sample injury note, identify bone, side, exact location, and encounter phase.
38. List the details a coder needs before coding a skin lesion procedure.

CHAPTER 6

Cardiovascular Blood and Lymphatic Terms

Cardiovascular terminology describes the heart, blood vessels, blood, and circulation. Small differences between arteries, veins, valves, chambers, and blood disorders are important.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
cardi o	heart	cardiology
angi o vas o	vessel	angiography
arteri o	artery	arteriosclerosis
phleb o ven o	vein	phlebitis
aort o	aorta	aortic
atri o	atrium	atrial
ventricul o	ventricle	ventricular
valv o valvul o	valve	valvuloplasty
coron o	heart or crown	coronary artery
hemat o hem o	blood	hematology
erythr o	red	erythrocyte
leuk o	white	leukocyte
thromb o	clot	thrombosis
lymph o	lymph	lymphoma
splen o	spleen	splenectomy
ischemia	reduced blood supply	myocardial ischemia
infarction	tissue death from loss of blood supply	myocardial infarction
stenosis	narrowing	aortic stenosis
occlusion	blockage	arterial occlusion
embolus	traveling material causing blockage	pulmonary embolus
aneurysm	abnormal vessel dilation	aortic aneurysm
anemia	reduced red cells or hemoglobin	iron deficiency anemia

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
arrhythmia	abnormal rhythm	cardiac arrhythmia
hypertension	high blood pressure	essential hypertension

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

39. Explain the difference between ischemia and infarction.
40. Explain the difference between a thrombus and an embolus.
41. Label the four heart chambers and the major valves.
42. Break cardiomyopathy, angioplasty, and thrombocytopenia into word parts.
43. Identify whether five sample terms involve an artery, vein, heart chamber, valve, blood cell, or lymphatic structure.

CHAPTER 7

Respiratory Terms

Respiratory terms identify the airway level, lung structure, breathing pattern, and type of diagnostic or therapeutic service.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
nas o rhin o	nose	rhinitis
sinus o	sinus	sinusitis
pharyng o	pharynx	pharyngitis
laryng o	larynx	laryngoscopy
trache o	trachea	tracheostomy
bronch o	bronchus	bronchoscopy
pneum o pneumon o	lung or air	pneumonia
pleur o	pleura	pleuritis
thorac o	chest	thoracentesis
spir o	breathing	spirometry
pnea	breathing	apnea
dyspnea	difficult breathing	shortness of breath
orthopnea	difficulty breathing while lying flat	cardiopulmonary symptom
hypoxia	low oxygen at tissue level	tissue hypoxia
hypoxemia	low oxygen in blood	arterial hypoxemia
atelectasis	collapsed or incompletely expanded lung	postoperative atelectasis
effusion	abnormal fluid collection	pleural effusion
hemoptysis	coughing blood	respiratory symptom
intubation	placement of a tube into an airway	endotracheal intubation
ventilation	movement of air into and out of lungs	mechanical ventilation

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

44. Break bronchoscopy, thoracentesis, and pneumonectomy into word parts.
45. Explain the difference between hypoxia and hypoxemia.
46. Trace airflow from the nose to the alveoli.
47. Identify upper-airway and lower-airway structures in ten terms.
48. Find the documented site, laterality, and procedure type in a sample respiratory note.

CHAPTER 8

Digestive Terms

Digestive terminology follows the path from the mouth through the gastrointestinal tract and includes accessory organs such as the liver, gallbladder, and pancreas.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
or o stomat o	mouth	stomatitis
esophag o	esophagus	esophagoscopy
gastr o	stomach	gastritis
duoden o	duodenum	duodenitis
enter o	intestine	enteritis
jejun o	jejunum	jejunostomy
ile o	ileum	ileitis
col o colon o	colon	colonoscopy
proct o rect o	rectum and anus	proctoscopy
hepat o	liver	hepatomegaly
chol e	bile	cholelithiasis
cholecyst o	gallbladder	cholecystectomy
pancreat o	pancreas	pancreatitis
append o appendic o	appendix	appendectomy
peritone o	peritoneum	peritonitis
dysphagia	difficulty swallowing	digestive symptom
hematemesis	vomiting blood	upper gastrointestinal symptom
melena	black tarry stool	possible gastrointestinal bleeding
hematochezia	red blood passed through rectum	lower gastrointestinal symptom
ascites	fluid in the abdominal cavity	abdominal distention
reflux	backward flow	gastroesophageal reflux
obstruction	blockage	intestinal obstruction
polyp	mucosal growth	colon polyp

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
biopsy	removal of tissue for examination	endoscopic biopsy

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

49. Trace the digestive tract from mouth to anus.
50. Explain the difference between ileum and ilium.
51. Break cholecystectomy, hepatomegaly, and gastroenteritis into word parts.
52. Explain the difference between hematemesis, melena, and hematochezia.
53. From an endoscopy note, identify the scope type, extent reached, finding, and treatment performed.

CHAPTER 9

Urinary and Male Reproductive Terms

The urinary system filters blood and removes waste. Male reproductive terminology often appears in the same CPT body-system region but describes different structures and functions.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
nephr o ren o	kidney	nephrology
pyel o	renal pelvis	pyelogram
ureter o	ureter	ureteroscopy
cyst o vesic o	urinary bladder	cystoscopy
urethr o	urethra	urethritis
lith o	stone	lithotripsy
ur o urin o	urine or urinary tract	urology
azot o	nitrogen compounds	azotemia
oliguria	reduced urine output	urinary symptom
anuria	absence of urine output	urinary symptom
polyuria	excessive urination	urinary symptom
hematuria	blood in urine	urinary finding
prostat o	prostate	prostatectomy
orch o orchi o	testis	orchiectomy
epididym o	epididymis	epididymitis
vas o	vas deferens	vasectomy
balan o	glans penis	balanitis
andr o	male	andrology
cryptorchidism	undescended testis	congenital condition
hydrocele	fluid collection around a testis	scrotal condition

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

54. Trace urine from the kidney to outside the body.
55. Explain the difference between the ureter and urethra.
56. Break nephrolithiasis, cystoscopy, and prostatectomy into word parts.
57. Identify whether five sample terms refer to urinary or reproductive anatomy.
58. From a procedure note, identify stone site, approach, imaging, device, and laterality.

CHAPTER 10

Female Reproductive and Obstetric Terms

Female reproductive and obstetric terminology requires exact anatomy plus pregnancy timing, trimester, fetus, and delivery information when applicable.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
gynec o	woman or female	gynecology
hyster o metr o uter o	uterus	hysterectomy
cervic o	cervix	cervicitis
salping o	fallopian tube	salpingectomy
oophor o	ovary	oophorectomy
vagin o colp o	vagina	vaginitis
vulv o	vulva	vulvectomy
mamm o mast o	breast	mammography
gravid o	pregnancy	multigravida
para	number of births beyond viability in obstetric use	multipara
antepartum	before delivery	antepartum care
intrapartum	during labor and delivery	intrapartum care
postpartum	after delivery	postpartum care
dystocia	difficult labor	labor complication
eclampsia	seizures related to hypertensive pregnancy disorder	obstetric emergency
preeclampsia	pregnancy-related hypertension with qualifying findings	obstetric condition
amenorrhea	absence of menstruation	reproductive symptom
menorrhagia	heavy menstrual bleeding	reproductive symptom
dysmenorrhea	painful menstruation	reproductive symptom
cesarean	surgical delivery through abdominal and uterine incisions	delivery procedure

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

59. Break salpingo-oophorectomy into its two anatomical roots and suffix.
60. Explain antepartum, intrapartum, and postpartum in chronological order.
61. Label the uterus, cervix, tubes, ovaries, vagina, and vulva.
62. Identify the pregnancy details needed before choosing an obstetric diagnosis code.
63. From a delivery note, identify method of delivery, complications, gestational age, and outcome documentation.

CHAPTER 11

Endocrine Terms

The endocrine system uses hormones to regulate metabolism, growth, stress response, reproduction, and other body functions.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
endocrin o	endocrine system	endocrinology
thyroid o	thyroid gland	thyroidectomy
parathyroid o	parathyroid gland	hyperparathyroidism
pituitar o hypophys o	pituitary gland	hypophysectomy
adren o adrenal o	adrenal gland	adrenalectomy
pancreat o	pancreas	pancreatic
glyc o gluc o	sugar or glucose	hyperglycemia
insulin	hormone lowering blood glucose	insulin therapy
hormon o	hormone	hormonal
metabolism	chemical processes using energy	metabolic disorder
goiter	enlarged thyroid	thyroid condition
thyrotoxicosis	excess circulating thyroid hormone effects	endocrine condition
diabetes mellitus	disorder of glucose regulation	may involve complications
hypoglycemia	low blood glucose	endocrine finding
hyperglycemia	high blood glucose	endocrine finding

Coding Connection

- Diabetes coding may depend on type, complication, control terminology, medication use, and current guidelines.
- Do not infer a causal relationship unless the classification or documentation permits it.
- Endocrine symptoms may overlap with other systems, so read the complete assessment and plan.

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

64. Explain hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism using word parts.
65. Identify the gland associated with five endocrine terms.
66. Explain the difference between insulin and glucose.
67. From a diabetes note, identify type, documented complications, and treatment status.
68. Locate the diabetes category in ICD-10-CM and list the instructions you must read before choosing a code.

CHAPTER 12

Nervous System Terms

The nervous system includes the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, and supporting structures. Identify the exact structure and whether the condition affects sensation, movement, cognition, or another function.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
neur o	nerve	neuropathy
encephal o	brain	encephalitis
cerebr o	cerebrum	cerebrovascular
cerebell o	cerebellum	cerebellar
myel o	spinal cord or bone marrow depending on context	myelopathy
mening o	meninges	meningitis
radicul o	nerve root	radiculopathy
psych o	mind	psychology
esthesi o	sensation	anesthesia
paresis	weakness or partial paralysis	hemiparesis
plegia	paralysis	quadriplegia
aphasia	impaired language	post-stroke aphasia
ataxia	impaired coordination	gait ataxia
seizure	abnormal electrical brain activity	convulsive event
syncope	temporary loss of consciousness from reduced cerebral perfusion	fainting
neuralgia	nerve pain	trigeminal neuralgia
neuropathy	nerve disease or dysfunction	peripheral neuropathy
stroke	acute cerebrovascular event	may be ischemic or hemorrhagic

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

69. Explain the difference between paresis and plegia.
70. Explain why myel o must be interpreted from context.
71. Label the cerebrum, cerebellum, brainstem, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves.
72. Identify laterality and residual deficits in a sample stroke note.
73. Break encephalopathy, radiculopathy, and neuralgia into word parts.

CHAPTER 13

Eye and Ear Terms

Eye and ear coding uses precise anatomical language. Use diagrams and locate the exact structure before selecting a diagnosis or procedure code.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
ophthalm o ocul o	eye	ophthalmology
opt o	vision	optometry
blephar o	eyelid	blepharoplasty
conjunctiv o	conjunctiva	conjunctivitis
corne o kerat o	cornea	keratitis
irid o	iris	iridectomy
retin o	retina	retinopathy
dacry o lacrim o	tear system	lacrimal
glaucoma	optic nerve damage often associated with pressure	eye disease
cataract	clouding of the natural lens	vision impairment
ot o	ear	otitis
audi o	hearing	audiology
tympan o myring o	eardrum	tympanoplasty
mastoid o	mastoid process	mastoidectomy
cochle o	cochlea	cochlear implant
vertigo	sensation of movement or spinning	vestibular symptom
tinnitus	perceived sound without external source	ringing in the ear
otalgia	ear pain	ear symptom

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

74. Explain the difference between a cataract and glaucoma.
75. Label the major external, middle, and inner ear structures.
76. Label the cornea, iris, lens, retina, and optic nerve.
77. Break blepharoplasty, retinopathy, and tympanoplasty into word parts.
78. Identify eye or ear structure, side, and procedure in five sample terms.

CHAPTER 14

Diagnostic and Procedure Terms

These words appear in notes across every body system. Learn what the action means before looking for a code.

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
biopsy	removal of tissue for examination	may use needle, scope, or excision
aspiration	removal by suction	fluid aspiration
incision	cutting into	incision and drainage
excision	cutting out	lesion excision
resection	removal of part or all of a structure	bowel resection
ablation	destruction or removal of tissue	cardiac ablation
anastomosis	surgical connection of structures	bowel anastomosis
dilation	widening an opening or vessel	vascular dilation
drainage	removal of fluid or material	abscess drainage
fusion	joining structures	spinal fusion
graft	tissue or material transferred for repair	skin graft
implantation	placement of a device or tissue	device implantation
catheterization	insertion of a catheter	urinary catheterization
endoscopy	visual examination with a scope	gastrointestinal endoscopy
laparoscopy	endoscopic examination through the abdominal wall	laparoscopic surgery
arthroscopy	endoscopic examination of a joint	knee arthroscopy
angiography	imaging of vessels	coronary angiography
ultrasound	imaging using sound waves	abdominal ultrasound
computed tomography	cross-sectional X-ray imaging	CT scan
magnetic resonance imaging	imaging using magnetic fields and radiofrequency	MRI
culture	growth or identification of microorganisms	urine culture

Term	Meaning	Coder connection
histology	microscopic study of tissues	pathology examination
screening	testing an asymptomatic person for early detection	screening mammography
diagnostic	evaluation of a sign symptom or known problem	diagnostic imaging
surveillance	ongoing monitoring for recurrence or risk	cancer surveillance

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

79. Explain the difference between incision, excision, and resection.
80. Explain the difference between screening, diagnostic testing, and surveillance.
81. For five procedures, identify action, anatomy, approach, and purpose.
82. Match each imaging term to the type of energy or technology it uses.
83. Read a short operative note and list every action word before opening CPT.

CHAPTER 15

Abbreviations and Documentation Safety

Abbreviations save time but can be ambiguous. Never assume the meaning when the context is unclear, and follow the facility policy and prohibited-abbreviation list.

Abbreviation	Common meaning	Context
BP	blood pressure	vital sign
HR	heart rate	vital sign
RR	respiratory rate	vital sign
SOB	shortness of breath	symptom
NPO	nothing by mouth	care instruction
PRN	as needed	medication instruction
BID	twice daily	frequency
TID	three times daily	frequency
QID	four times daily	frequency
PO	by mouth	route
IV	intravenous	route
IM	intramuscular	route
SC SQ	subcutaneous	route; verify facility-approved form
CBC	complete blood count	laboratory test
CMP	comprehensive metabolic panel	laboratory panel
CT	computed tomography	imaging
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging	imaging
ECG EKG	electrocardiogram	cardiac test
HPI	history of present illness	documentation section
ROS	review of systems	documentation section
MDM	medical decision making	E M element
Dx	diagnosis	documentation shorthand
Tx	treatment	documentation shorthand

Abbreviation	Common meaning	Context
Hx	history	documentation shorthand

Safety Rules

- Use the full note and specialty context before interpreting an abbreviation.
- Do not guess when one abbreviation has multiple meanings.
- Query or follow organizational policy when the meaning affects code selection.
- Do not change the provider's documentation to create a diagnosis.
- Treat copy-forward or templated text cautiously when it conflicts with the current encounter.

Practice

Complete these exercises without an answer key. Use your current coding books and class notes when directed.

84. Find five abbreviations in a sample note and explain how context confirms the meaning.
85. List three abbreviations that could have more than one meaning.
86. Write a compliant clarification question for an abbreviation that changes the diagnosis.
87. Rewrite ten abbreviations as complete words.
88. Review your organization's prohibited-abbreviation list if one is available.

Coding Connection Practice

The goal is not merely to define a term. A coder must connect the term to the record, body system, code set, and required documentation details.

The Terminology to Code Workflow

89. Read the entire note before highlighting terms.
90. Circle diagnoses, symptoms, findings, and status conditions.
91. Underline procedures, tests, drugs, supplies, and equipment.
92. Break unfamiliar words into prefix, root, and suffix.
93. Identify the body system and exact anatomy.
94. Mark laterality, location, approach, size, number, time, and units.
95. Choose the correct code set: ICD-10-CM for why, CPT for what, and HCPCS Level II for many supplies, drugs, equipment, and services.
96. Use the appropriate Index and verify the code in the main section.
97. Read all guidelines, notes, and parenthetical instructions.
98. Compare the final codes with the provider documentation and query instead of guessing.

Case Practice

99. A patient has painful inflammation of the right knee joint and undergoes visual examination of the joint. Break the key terms apart, identify the body system, and state which code sets would describe the condition and procedure.
100. A patient has difficult breathing and receives a chest imaging study. Identify the symptom term, body system, diagnostic service, and documentation details needed for coding.
101. A patient has a stone in the left ureter and undergoes endoscopic treatment with temporary device placement. Identify each anatomical and procedure term and list details that could change code selection.
102. A provider evaluates diabetes with a documented kidney complication and manages medication. Identify the endocrine and urinary terminology and list the coding rules that must be checked.
103. A surgeon removes a skin lesion from the arm and repairs the wound. Identify the procedure terms and list the measurements and classifications needed before using CPT.
104. A patient receives an intravenous therapeutic drug. Identify the route, service type, drug reporting system, time documentation, and unit calculation information needed.
105. A patient is seen after an old injury for persistent nerve pain. Identify the residual condition, original injury concept, and sequela terminology.
106. A patient receives a screening test without symptoms. Explain why screening terminology matters and how the coding approach would differ if the patient had a symptom.

Personal Error Log

Term	My first interpretation	Review action
Word or concept	What I thought it meant	What I need to review

Student Glossary

Term	Plain meaning	Coding note
Acute	sudden onset or short duration	
Benign	not malignant	
Chronic	long lasting or persistent	
Congenital	present at birth	
Diagnosis	identified disease condition or reason for care	
Distal	farther from attachment point	
Etiology	cause of a disease	
Idiopathic	without a known cause	
Iatrogenic	resulting from medical treatment	
Inflammation	tissue response that may include redness heat swelling and pain	
Malignant	cancerous with potential invasion or spread	
Manifestation	a sign or condition resulting from another disease	
Metastasis	spread of malignancy to another site	
Necrosis	death of tissue	
Neoplasm	new abnormal growth of tissue	
Prognosis	expected course or outcome	

Term	Plain meaning	Coding note
Proximal	closer to attachment point	
Sequela	residual effect after the acute phase	
Sign	objective evidence observed or measured	
Symptom	subjective experience reported by the patient	
Syndrome	group of signs and symptoms occurring together	
Traumatic	caused by injury	
Unilateral	one side	
Bilateral	both sides	
Exacerbation	worsening or flare of a condition	
Remission	decrease or disappearance of disease signs and symptoms	
Screening	testing without signs or symptoms for early detection	
Surveillance	ongoing monitoring because of risk or history	
Complication	condition arising during disease or treatment	
Comorbidity	additional condition existing with the main condition	

Final Study Checklist

- I can identify prefixes, roots, combining forms, and suffixes.
- I can translate unfamiliar terms into plain language.
- I can identify major body systems and exact anatomy.
- I can distinguish diagnosis, symptom, test, and procedure terms.

- I can use laterality and directional language correctly.
- I know when an abbreviation is too unclear to interpret safely.
- I can choose the correct code set before beginning a lookup.
- I use the Index first and verify the final code in the main section.
- I never code from terminology alone when documentation or guidelines require more detail.
- I query instead of guessing.