

Medical Terms

Abnormal: Not normal. Deviating from the usual structure, position, condition, or behavior. In referring to a growth, abnormal may mean that it is cancerous or premalignant (likely to become cancer).

Biopsy: The removal of a sample of tissue for purposes of diagnosis. (Many definitions of 'biopsy' stipulate that the sample of tissue is removed for examination under a microscope. This may or may not be the case. The diagnosis may be achieved by other means such as by analysis of chromosomes or genes.)

Bullous: Characterized by blistering, such as in a second-degree burn.

Cancer: An abnormal growth of cells which tend to proliferate in an uncontrolled way and, in some cases, to metastasize (spread).

Chronic: This important term in medicine comes from the Greek *chronos*, time and means lasting a long time.

Condition: The term 'condition' has a number of biomedical meanings including the following:

1. An unhealthy state, such as in "this is a progressive condition."
2. A state of fitness, such as "getting into condition."
3. Something that is essential to the occurrence of something else; essentially a 'precondition.'
4. As a verb: to cause a change in something so that a response that was previously associated with a certain stimulus becomes associated with another stimulus; to condition a person, as in behavioral conditioning.

Cortisone: An adrenocorticoid hormone, a naturally occurring hormone made by and secreted by the adrenal cortex, the outer part (the cortex) of the adrenal gland.

Dermatology: Dermatology is literally the study of the skin.

1. The branch of medicine concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases of the skin, hair, nails, oral cavity and genitals.
2. Sometimes also, cosmetic care and enhancement.

Disease: Illness or sickness often characterized by typical patient problems (symptoms) and physical findings (signs).

Disruption sequence: The events that occur when a fetus that is developing normally is subjected to a destructive agent such as the rubella (German measles) virus.

Health: As officially defined by the World Health Organization, a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Immune: Protected against infection. The Latin *immunis* means free, exempt.

Immunoglobulin: A protein produced by plasma cells and lymphocytes and characteristic of these types of cells. Immunoglobulins play an essential role in the body's immune system. They attach to foreign substances, such as bacteria, and assist in destroying them. Immunoglobulin is abbreviated Ig. The classes of immunoglobulins are termed immunoglobulin A (IgA), immunoglobulin G (IgG), immunoglobulin M (IgM), immunoglobulin D (IgD) and immunoglobulin E (IgE).

Inflammation: A basic way in which the body reacts to infection, irritation or other injury, the key feature being redness, warmth, swelling and pain. Inflammation is now recognized as a type of nonspecific immune response.

Intravenous immunoglobulin: A sterile solution of concentrated antibodies extracted from healthy people that is given straight into a vein. It is used to treat disorders of the immune system, or to boost immune response to serious illness. Abbreviated IVIG or IGG (for intravenous gamma globulin).

Lupus: A chronic inflammatory condition caused by an autoimmune disease. An autoimmune disease occurs when the body's tissues are attacked by its own immune system. Patients with lupus have unusual antibodies in their blood that are targeted against their own body tissues.

Membrane: A very thin layer of tissue that covers a surface.

Skin: The skin is the body's outer covering. It protects us against heat and light, injury, and infection. It regulates body temperature and stores water, fat, and vitamin D. Weighing about 6 pounds, the skin is the body's largest organ. It is made up of two main layers; the outer epidermis and the inner dermis.

Skin biopsy: Removal of a piece of skin for the purpose of further examination in the laboratory using a microscope.

Systemic: Affecting the entire body. A systemic disease such as diabetes can affect the whole body. Systemic chemotherapy employs drugs that travel through the bloodstream and reach and affect cells all over the body.

Systemic lupus erythematosus: A chronic inflammatory condition caused by an autoimmune disease. An autoimmune disease occurs when the body's tissues are attacked by its own immune system. Patients with lupus have unusual antibodies in their blood that are targeted against their own body tissues.

Topical: Pertaining to a particular surface area. A topical agent is applied to a certain area of the skin and is intended to affect only the area to which it is applied. Whether its effects are indeed limited to

that area depends upon whether the agent stays where it is put or is absorbed into the blood stream.