

Health Literacy: ABC's Of Medicine

This table is provided to help you understand common medical acronyms you may encounter as you navigate medical appointments, look at your lab reports, or try to decipher research studies.

Abbreviation	Stands for	More information
ACE	Angiotensin converting enzyme	Drugs called ACE inhibitors are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, diabetes and kidney diseases.
AFIB	Atrial fibrillation	A disturbance of the rhythm of the heart
AMD	Age-related macular degeneration	An eye problem
AMI	Acute myocardial infarction	Heart attack
AODM	Adult onset diabetes mellitus	Type 2 diabetes
BID	Twice a day	Your doctor may write this on your prescription.
BMI	Body mass index	A measure of how much you should weigh based on your height
BP	Blood pressure	The force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries
CA	Cancer OR Calcium	
CAD	Coronary artery disease	A common type of heart disease
CAT	Computerized axial tomography	A type of x-ray
CBC	Complete blood count	Test that measures properties of the cells in your blood
CHF	Congestive heart failure	A condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood throughout the body.
CNS	Central nervous system	The brain and spinal cord

COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	A lung disease that makes it hard to breathe
CPK	Creatine phosphokinase	You may have a blood test for CPK to see if you've had a heart attack.
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation	An emergency procedure for a patient whose heart has stopped or is no longer breathing
CRP	C-reactive protein	You may have a blood test for CRP to see if you have - inflammation or heart problems.
CSF	Cerebrospinal fluid	A fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord
CVA	Cerebrovascular accident	A stroke or "brain attack"
CXR	Chest x-ray	A diagnostic test that uses radiation to make images of your lungs
DJD	Degenerative joint disease	Another name for arthritis
DM	Diabetes mellitus	Chronic abnormally high levels of sugar in the blood.
DVT	Deep-vein thrombosis	A blood clot
DX	Diagnosis	
ECG, EKG	Electrocardiogram	Test that measures electrical impulses of the heart
ECHO	Echocardiogram	Test that uses sound waves to look at the heart
EEG	Electroencephalogram	Test that measures electrical impulses of the brain
EMG	Electromyography	Test that measures electrical impulses of muscles
ENT	Ear, nose and throat	
ESR	Erythrocyte sedimentation rate	A blood test for inflammation

GERD	Gastroesophageal reflux disease	A problem that happens when stomach contents leak back into your gullet
GI	Gastrointestinal	Another term for your digestive system
HCT	Hematocrit	A blood test measurement
HDL	High density lipoprotein	A type of cholesterol, also known as "good" cholesterol
HGB	Hemoglobin	A blood test measurement
HRT	Hormone replacement therapy	Hormones supplements that women may take
HTN	Hypertension	High blood pressure
IBD	Inflammatory bowel disease	A name for two digestive disorders-- ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease
IBS	Irritable bowel syndrome	A problem with the large intestine
ICU	Intensive care unit	Special hospital unit
IDDM	Insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus	Type 1 diabetes
IM	Intramuscular	A type of injection
IV	Intravenous	A type of injection
LDL	Low density lipoprotein	A type of cholesterol, also known as "bad" cholesterol
LFT	Liver function tests	
MI	Myocardial infarction	Heart attack
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging	A type of imaging test
MRSA	Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus	A type of infection

MS	Multiple sclerosis	A disease of the nervous system
NIDDM	Non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus	Type 2 diabetes
NKDA	No known drug allergies	
NSAID	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug	Drugs like ibuprofen
PAD	Peripheral arterial disease	Diseases of the arteries outside the heart
PAT	Paroxysmal atrial tachycardia	A disturbance of the rhythm of the heart
PET	Positron emission tomography	A type of x-ray test
PFT	Pulmonary function test	You may need PFTs to find out how your lungs are working.
PRN	As needed	Your doctor may write this on your prescription.
PSA	Prostate specific antigen	You may have a blood test for PSA to detect prostate disease.
PT	Prothrombin time	A measure of blood clotting
PTH	Parathyroid hormone	You may have a blood test for PTH to detect parathyroid disease.
PTT	Partial thromboplastin time	A measure of blood clotting
PUD	Peptic ulcer disease	A disease of the stomach
PVC	Premature ventricular contraction	A disturbance of the rhythm of the heart
QID	Four times a day	Your doctor may write this on your prescription.
RA	Rheumatoid arthritis	A type of joint disease
RBC	Red blood cell	A type of blood cell

Rx	Treatment	
SAD	Seasonal affective disorder	Depression during seasons with little light
SOB	Shortness of Breath	
T3	Triiodothyronine	You may have a blood test for T3 to detect thyroid disease.
T4	Thyroxine	You may have a blood test for T4 to detect thyroid disease.
TIA	Transient ischemic attack	A small stroke
TIBC	Total iron binding capacity	A test that measures the amount of iron in your blood
TID	Three times a day	Your doctor may write this on your prescription.
TSH	Thyroid stimulating hormone	You may have a blood test for TSH to detect thyroid disease.
URI	Upper respiratory infection	Another name for the common cold
UTI	Urinary tract infection	Infection of the bladder and kidneys
WBC	White blood cell	A type of blood cell

Adapted from the National Institutes of Health: US National Library of Medicine. Appendix B: Some Common Abbreviations. <https://medlineplus.gov/appendixb.html>. Accessed on September 7, 2016.