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Week 7: Medical Terminology

Module 1: Medical Terminology 1: Basic Word Structure

Lesson: How Do You Decode Medical Words?

Lesson Overview	
Students learn how medical terms are built from meaningful word parts and how healthcare professionals use a consistent process to determine meaning. Through evidence gathered from the module, students practice decoding medical terms and explaining how medical language communicates information about health.	
Learning Targets	Vocabulary
Identify parts of a medical word (prefix, root, suffix, combining form) Follow a step-by-step process to decode a medical term Explain how understanding medical terms helps me understand health information	Root the essential meaning of a medical term Prefix a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes meaning Suffix a word ending that modifies meaning Combining Form a root word and combining vowel combined together
Materials	Instructional Notes
Module Student response sheets Whiteboard or chart paper	Students have likely encountered medical words during doctor visits, in advertisements, or while discussing health concerns. Many students assume medical terminology must be memorized or that only healthcare professionals can understand it. This lesson helps students discover that medical terms follow predictable patterns that can be analyzed and decoded. Students learn that combining forms, prefixes, roots, and suffixes each contribute meaning and that health science professionals use a systematic process to interpret unfamiliar terms. Students may believe long medical words are impossible to understand without memorization or may try to read terms from left to right. Through the module, students discover that medical terms should be decoded by starting with the suffix, then returning to the beginning of the term and reading across. This lesson establishes a foundation for future medical terminology learning by helping students develop a transferable decoding process.



Learning Experience

8 min	Opening	The teacher displays the medical term <i>hyperglycemia</i> and provides the following word-part meanings from the module: <i>hyper</i> = excessive, <i>glyc</i> = sugar, and <i>emia</i> = blood condition. The teacher asks, “What do you think this word means?” and facilitates a brief partner discussion. Students are invited to share their reasoning. The teacher then asks, “Are medical words random, or are they built from meaningful parts?” Students write an initial explanation of what they think <i>hyperglycemia</i> means and use the word-part clues as evidence. They discuss their thinking with a partner and share ideas about how medical words are constructed.
15 min	Module	Focus: How medical words are organized and how healthcare professionals decode them. Guiding Questions: • What are the parts of a medical word? • What role does each part play in the meaning of a term? • What process is used to decode a medical word? Quick Checks: • What is a combining form? • What does a suffix tell you? • What does a prefix tell you? • What is the role of the combining vowel? • What order is used to decode medical terms?
15 min	Application	The teacher tells students, “A patient portal displays medical terms, but many patients do not know what they mean. Your job is to help patients understand the information by determining which explanation best matches each medical term.” The teacher displays the following medical terms from the module: <i>Hyperglycemia</i>, <i>Hematology</i>, <i>Hematologist</i>, <i>Electrocardiogram</i>, <i>Cardiologist</i>, and <i>Pericardium</i>. The teacher displays possible explanations, including both accurate and inaccurate matches, and reminds students to use the module’s decoding process: start with the suffix, return to the beginning, and then read across. Students begin with Step 1: Decode. Working with a partner, they analyze each medical term and use word parts as evidence. In Step 2: Match and Justify, students match each medical term with the explanation they believe is most accurate and record evidence from the word parts that supports each match. In Step 3: Defend Your Thinking, students compare matches with another pair and discuss any disagreements using evidence from the module. In Step 4: Revise, students revise matches if new evidence changes their thinking and prepare to explain their reasoning.

2 min	Reflection	How does using a decoding process help you understand medical terms more effectively than guessing?
2 min	Career Connections	Health science professionals regularly encounter unfamiliar medical terms and use word-part analysis to determine meaning. Doctors, nurses, medical assistants, laboratory professionals, and health information specialists rely on decoding strategies to accurately interpret and communicate health information. Understanding medical terminology can also help people better understand information they hear during healthcare visits and in everyday life.