

Glossary of medical terms

The following is a glossary (list of definitions) of some of the medical terms used in this Handbook.

Accessory muscles	Muscles other than the diaphragm which are involved in respiration, especially the intercostals and the external neck muscles
Anaphylactic	Severe allergic reaction characterised by hypotension and swelling of upper airway tissues; may also involve wheeze and rash; mediated by mast cell degranulation and histamine release.
Anaphylactoid	Similar to an anaphylactic reaction but not mediated by mast cell degranulation; usually less severe.
Antecubital	The anterior surface of the cubital fossae, (ie. The flexor surface of the elbow).
Anuria	No output of urine
Assessment	History, examination and investigations.
Bradycardia	Heart rate less than 50 beats per minute.
Bulbar	Related to the cranial nerves 9 and 10 (eg. Bulbar palsy).
Cardiotoxicity	Toxicity effecting the tissues of the heart.
Coagulopathy	Failure of the blood to clot due to an absence or dysfunction of clotting factors or platelets.
Coma	Decreased conscious state to the point of being non-responsive to stimuli.
Compartment syndrome	Loss of blood supply to a limb when the pressure within a compartment of a limb (compartment enclosed by strong fascia eg. Peroneal compartment of leg) is greater than the venous blood pressure. This can occur with any injury involving significant swelling, such as a burn or a snakebite.
Cranial nerves	Those nerves that have their origin directly from the brain, rather than the spinal cord; numbered 1-12.
Diplopia	Double vision; occurs when the eyes are not looking in exactly the same direction, usually due to nerve or muscle problems with eye movement.
Disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC)	Coagulopathy due to the consumption of clotting factors and platelets; a process causing clotting factors to be consumed in a generalised, disorganised fashion, not involving useful clot formation.
Dysarthria	Difficulty speaking due to problems with the muscles of the mouth or pharynx (weakness, poor coordination).
Dysphagia	Difficulty swallowing
Dysphonia	A quiet, altered voice.
Dyspnoea	Difficulty breathing; respiratory distress.

Envenomation	In the setting of snakebite, this means that toxin has entered the patient's body and they are showing symptoms or signs.
Gag reflex	A reflex whereby stimulus of the pharynx causes the glottis to close over the laryngeal opening, lost in coma and in generalised paralysis.
Haematemesis	Vomiting blood; either bright red, indicating torrential bleeding, or dark brown ("coffee grounds") due to alteration of blood in the stomach by the stomach acid.
Haemoglobinemia	Haemoglobin in the blood (in the serum, due to breakdown of red blood cells).
Haemoglobinuria	Haemoglobin in the urine.
Haemoptysis	Coughing up blood.
Haemorrhage	Bleeding.
Hypertension	Increased blood pressure.
Hypotension	Low blood pressure.
Inspiration	Breathing in.
Intercostal muscles	The muscles that lie between the ribs, are not used in usual quiet breathing, but can be used as accessory muscles of inspiration and expiration
Intracranial	Inside the skull.
Lymphadenitis	Inflammation of lymph nodes.
Lymphadenopathy	Enlargement of lymph nodes.
Malaena	Stools containing, or composed of, altered blood; blood from the upper GI tract that has been altered by digestive processes (not fresh blood).
Management	Specific treatments and general supportive treatments aimed at improving or curing a condition; communication about the patient (referral) and disposition (where they are sent for care).
Menorrhagia	Heavy menstrual bleeding.
Minute volume	The volume of air that is breathed (and out) in one minute.
Myoglobinuria	The presence of muscle breakdown products in the urine.
Myolysis	Muscle cell damage/breakdown.
Myotoxicity	Toxicity to (skeletal) muscle.
Neurotoxicity	Toxicity to nerves/the nervous system
Ocular	Involving the eye
Oedema	The collection of fluid within tissues.
Oliguria	A condition of markedly reduced urine output.
Ophthalmoplegia (external)	Paralysis of the external muscles of the eye.
Oxygenation	The delivery of oxygen, either to a patient, or to their tissues.
Palpitations	Awareness of the heart beat; may be regular or irregular, usually faster, and possibly stronger, than normal.
Paralysis	A complete loss of the function of a muscle or muscles; can be either neurological or muscular in origin.

Paresis	Weakness (a partial paralysis).
Procoagulant	Factor that increases the propensity of blood to clot.
Protrusion	Sticking out.
Ptosis	Paralysis of the muscles of the eye lid, leading to drooping of the upper lid(s), and a reduced ability to look upwards.
Pulmonary	Related to the lungs or respiratory system.
Rectal bleeding	Bright red (fresh) bleeding from the rectum.
Renal	Pertaining to the kidneys.
Respiratory	Related to the lungs or respiratory system.
Rhabdomyolysis	A clinical syndrome in which there is massive muscle breakdown; involves myoglobinaemia (myoglobin – the major muscle protein, and potassium ions leaking into the blood), myoglobinuria (myoglobin in the urine) and the deposition of myoglobin in the kidneys leading to acute renal failure.
Signs	Objective signs found on physical examination.
Sternomastoid	An anterior muscle of the neck that can be used as an accessory muscle of respiration.
Symptoms	Subjective complaints found on history-taking.
Tachycardia	An increased heart rate, greater than 100 beats per minute.
Tachypnoea	An increased respiratory rate, greater than 20 per minute (for adults).
Tidal volume	The volume of air moved in one breath.
Trapezius	A posterior muscle of the neck that can be used as an accessory muscle of respiration.
Trismus	Spasm of the muscles of the jaw.
Truncal	Related to the trunk, i.e.: The truncal muscles are the muscles of the trunk.
Ventilation	The movement of air in and out of the lungs; allows for the absorption of oxygen and the exhalation of carbon dioxide; is can be spontaneous or artificial (eg. Positive pressure ventilation).