

If you work in a medical setting, you use medical words every day. In addition, you hear medical terms spoken in your doctor's office, read about health issues, and make daily decisions about your own health care and the health care of your family.

Terms such as arthritis, electrocardiogram, hepatitis, and anemia describe conditions and tests that are familiar. Other medical words are more complicated.

Medical words are like individual jigsaw puzzles. Once you divide the terms into their component parts and learn the meaning of the individual parts, you can use that knowledge to understand many other new terms.

A **word root** is the word part that is the core of the word, it contains the fundamental meaning of the word; (**Card = heart, Cyst = bladder, Gastr = stomach**). It frequently describe a **body part**.

A **suffix** is a word part attached to the **end** of the word root to modify its meaning.

Cardi/**ac** (-**ac** is a suffix meaning **pertaining to**)

A **prefix** is a word part attached to the **beginning** of a word root to modify its meaning. It will frequently suggest information about the no. of parts, location of organ, direction, time, or frequency.

**Sub**/hepat/ic (**Sub**- is a prefix that means under/ Hepat – is a word root/ -ic is a suffix meaning pertaining to).

A **combining vowel** is a word part, usually an '**o**' and used to ease pronunciation

A combining vowel is:

- Placed to connect two word roots  
**Oste/o/arthr/itis**
- Placed to connect a word root and a suffix  
**Arthr/o/plasty**
- Not used to connect a prefix and a word root  
**Prenatal**
- Not used when the suffix begins with a vowel  
**Hepat/ic**

## Combining Form:

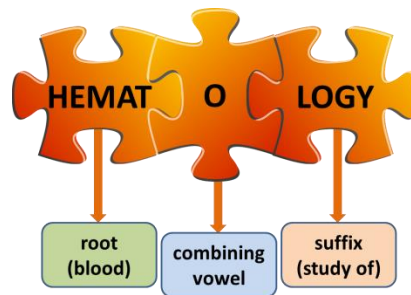
Word root + vowel = Combining form

$\text{Micr}_{(\text{Word root})} / \text{O}_{(\text{Combining vowel})} = \text{Micr/o}_{(\text{combining form})}$

**Examples: Gastr/o, therm/o, micr/o**

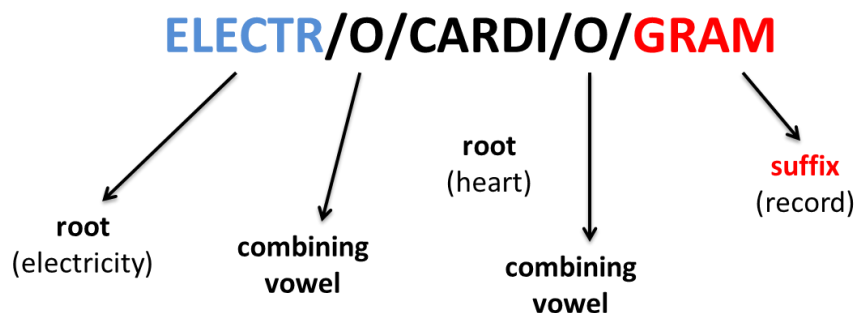
Combining vowel = (a, e, i, o, u, or y)

$\text{Gastr}_{(\text{Word root})} / \text{O}_{(\text{combining vowel})} / \text{duoden}_{(\text{Word root})} / \text{-ostomy}_{(\text{suffix})}$

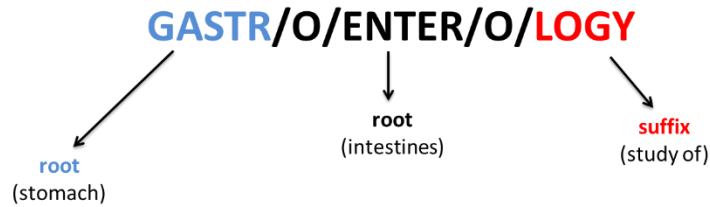


## How to read the medical terms

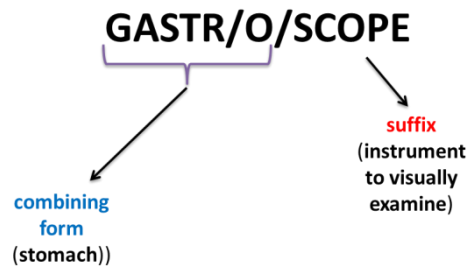
Read the meaning of medical terms from the **suffix**, **back to the beginning of the term**, and **then across**.



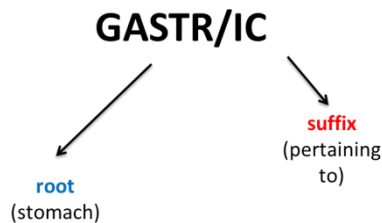
- Start with the **suffix at the end of the term**. The suffix **-GRAM** means a record.
- Now look at the beginning of the term. **ELECTR** is a word **root**, and it means electricity.
- This medical term has two roots. The second root is **CARDI**, meaning heart.
- Broken down this way, **ELECTROCARDIOGRAM** means record of the electricity in the heart.



- The two combining forms are **GASTR/O** and **ENTER/O**.
- The entire word (**reading from the suffix, back to the beginning of the term, and across**)
- means *study of the stomach and the intestines*.

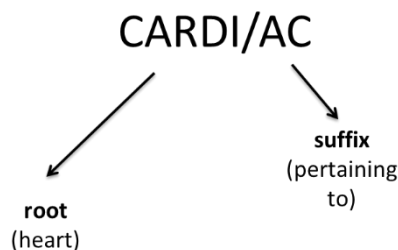


means **instrument to visually examine the stomach.**



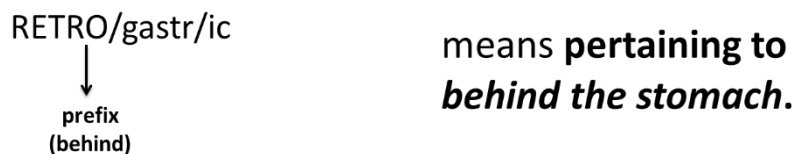
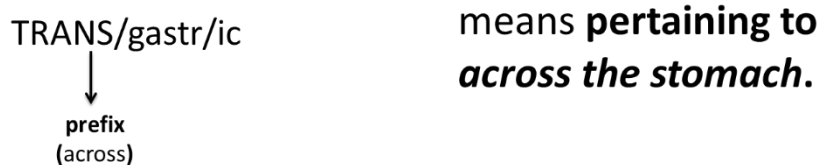
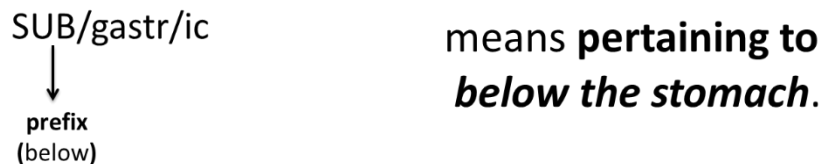
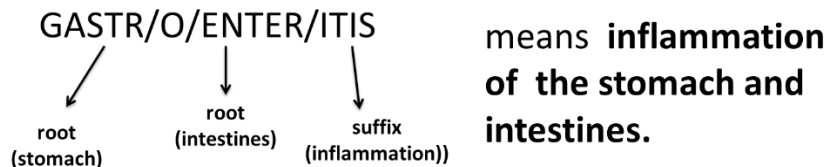
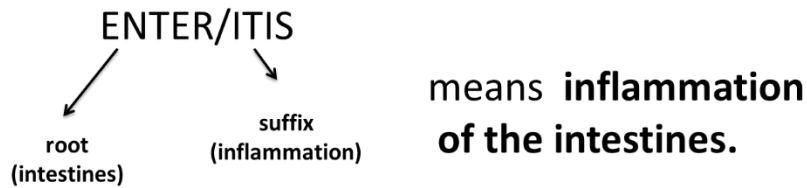
means **pertaining to the stomach.**

- **Notice that the** combining vowel is dropped when the suffix (-IC) begins with a vowel. -IC means pertaining to.
- Words ending with -IC are adjectives that modify a noun (e.g., gastric pain, gastric cancer).



means **pertaining to the heart.**

- **Again, the** combining vowel (O) is dropped when the suffix (-AC) begins with a vowel.
- Words ending in -AC are adjectives (e.g., cardiac care, cardiac arrest).



**Review** of the important word parts:

1. **Root**—gives the essential *meaning of the term*.
2. **Suffix**—is the word *ending*.
3. **Prefix**—is a small part added to the *beginning of a term*.
4. **Combining vowel**—*connects roots to suffixes and roots to other roots*.
5. **Combining form**—is the combination of the *root and the combining vowel*.

**Some important rules to remember are:**

1. Read the meaning of medical words from the suffix to the beginning of the word and then across.
2. Drop the combining vowel before a suffix that starts with a vowel.
3. Keep the combining vowel between word roots, even if the second root begins with a vowel.