Medical Terminology

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Reading A Medical Term

When reading a medical term and attempt to decipher it's meaning you :

- Begin at the Suffix

- Move to the Prefix (if present)

- And then the root

Singular and plural endings

- Many medical terms come from Greek or Latin words.

- Rules for forming plurals come from these languages.

- Other words use English rules.

- Each medical term must be considered individually when changing from singular to plural.

Table 1.6

GUIDELINES TO UNUSUAL PLURAL FORMS		
Guideline	**Singular**	**Plural**
1. If the term ends in **a**, the plural is usually formed by adding an **e**.	bursa vertebra	bursae vertebrae
2. If the term ends in **ex** or **ix**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **ex** or **ix** to **ices**.	appendix index	appendices indices
3. If the term ends in **is**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **is** to **es**.	diagnosis metastasis	diagnoses metastases
4. If the term ends in **itis**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **is** to **ides**.	arthritis meningitis	arthritides meningitides
5. If the term ends in **nx**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **x** to **ges**.	phalanx meninx	phalanges meninges
6. If the term ends in **on**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **on** to **a**.	criterion ganglion	criteria ganglia
7. If the term ends in **um**, the plural usually is formed by changing the **um** to **a**.	diverticulum ovum	diverticula ova
8. If the term ends in **us**, the plural is usually formed by changing the **us** to **i**.	alveolus malleolus	alveoli malleoli

*If you are in doubt as to how a plural is formed, **look it up** in a medical dictionary!*

Suffix: Singular vs. Plural

Greek

Singular Suffixes

o -on
  o Spermatozoon, ganglion
o -ma
  o Carcinoma, lipoma
o -sis
  o Crisis, prognosis
o -nx
  o Larynx, pharynx

Plural Suffixes

o -a
  o Spermatozoa, ganglia
o -mata
  o Carcinomata, lipomata
o -ses
  o Crises, prognoses
o -ges
  o Larynges, pharynges

Suffix: Singular vs. Plural

Latin

Singular Suffixes

- -a
  - Vertebra, conjunctiva
- -us
  - Bacillus, bronchus
- -um
  - Bacterium, ilium
- -is
  - Testis

Plural Suffixes

- -ae
  - Vertebrae, conjunctivae
- -i
  - Bacilli, bronchi
- -a
  - Bacteria, ilia
- -es
  - Testes

Suffix: Singular vs. Plural

Latin

Singular Suffixes

- -ex
  - cortex
- -ix
  - Appendix
- -ax
  - thorax

Plural Suffixes

- -ices
  - cortices
- -ices
  - appendices
- -aces
  - thoraces

Practice…

Singular:

- Sarcoma
- Diagnosis
- Phalanx
- Coccus
- Calcaneum
- Vertex
- Cervix
- thorax

Plural:

- Sarcomata
- Diagnoses
- Phalanges
- Cocci
- Calcanea
- Vertices
- Cervices
- thoraces

Pronunciation Guidelines

- Pronunciation of medical word

- May be exactly like it sounds
  - **Example: febrile = 'f' sound, begins with 'f'**
- May begin with a letter, or letters that produces the same phonetic sound
  - **Example: physiology = 'f' sound, begins with 'ph'**

Pronunciation Guidelines (continued)

- If it sounds like **'f'**
  - **Look for 'f' = febrile**
  - **Look for 'ph' = physiology**

- If it sounds like **'j'**
  - **Look for 'j' = jejunum**
  - **Look for 'ge' = genesis**
  - **Look for 'gi' = gingivitis**
  - **Look for 'gy' = gyrus**

Pronunciation Guidelines (continued)

- If it sounds like **'k'**
  - **Look for 'k' = kyphosis**
  - **Look for 'c' = cornea**
  - **Look for 'ch' = chorion**
  - **Look for 'qu' = quadruplet**

- If it sounds like **'n'**
  - **Look for 'n' = neonatal**
  - **Look for 'pn' = pneumonia**
  - **Look for 'kn' = knee**

Pronunciation Guidelines (continued)

- If it sounds like **'z'**
  - **Look for 'z' = zygomatic**
  - **Look for 'x' = xanthoma**

Additional Pronunciation Rules

- Words that **begin** with **'c'**
  - If followed by 'e', 'i', or 'y'
  - Pronounced as soft 'c'
  - Has 'j' sound

- Examples
  - 'ce' = cervix
  - 'ci' = circumduction
  - 'cy' = cyst

Additional Pronunciation Rules (continued)

- Words that **begin** with **'c'**
  - **If followed by 'a', 'o', 'u', or consonant**
  - **Pronounced as hard 'c'**
  - **Has a 'k' sound**
- Examples
  - **'ca' = cancer**
  - **'co' = collagen**
  - **'cu' = cuticle**
  - **'ch' = cheiloplasty**