



The Integumentary System

Basic Glossary of Terms for Healthcare Interpreters

	English	Definition	
1.	Abrasion	A damaged area of the skin caused by wearing away or scraping.	
2.	Abscess	A collection of pus in any given area caused by bacteria, parasites or foreign material.	
3.	Alopecia	Total or partial loss of hair on the body; also called baldness.	
4.	Basal cell carcinoma	Skin cancer that starts in the cells that are designed to make new cells as old ones die off; occurs most often on sun-exposed areas of the skin.	
5.	Bedsores	Injury or breakage of the skin caused by prolonged pressure such as sitting or lying down for too long.	
6.	Boil	Another term for furuncle, this is a dome-shaped lesion filled with pus due to an infected or inflamed hair follicle.	
7.	Cauterize	To burn the skin at the site of a wound using a chemical caustic substance or heating instrument to stop the bleeding or prevent infection.	
8.	Cryosurgery	A procedure that uses intense cold to destroy undesired skin tissue, such as warts.	
9.	Cyst	A cavity or sac containing fluid anywhere on or in the body.	
10.	Debridement	The surgical cleaning of a wound to remove contaminated or damaged tissues and/or foreign material.	
11.	Dermabrasion	A procedure used in cosmetic surgery that removes the outer layer of skin to resurface the area with new, smooth skin, giving a more youthful appearance.	
12.	Dermis	The layer of skin under the epidermis that holds capillaries, sweat glands, nerve endings, and hair follicles.	
13.	Dermatitis	Red, inflamed skin tissue that may be warm to the touch, sore, or blistering; often the result of direct irritation from allergens or other external agents	
14.	Diaphoresis	Unusually excessive sweating, generally caused by drug side effects or disease.	
15.	Ecchymosis	Skin discoloration forming an irregular flat bluish spot, usually the result of bleeding under the skin caused by bruising.	
16.	Eczema	Also called atopic dermatitis, this is a chronic condition marked by itchy redness to the skin.	
17.	Edema	A collection of fluid in the tissues, leading to swelling and inflammation, especially in the legs, feet, hands, and arms.	

18.	Epidermis	The outermost layer of the skin that protects the body from external chemicals and agents.	
19.	Erythema	Reddening of the skin, usually in patches, but superficial in nature; generally caused by dilation of the capillaries.	
20.	Fissure	A breakage or crack in the skin that forms as a long and narrow opening.	
21.	Gangrene	A condition marked by discoloration of the skin as a result of tissue death caused by infection or loss of blood flow to the area. Most commonly seen in the extremities.	
22.	Hives	Red, round welts on the skin that itch and may become swollen; generally caused by an allergic reaction.	
23.	Impetigo	Generally occurring in small children, this condition is characterized by red sores around the mouth and nose and on the feet and hands; the sores eventually rupture, leaving a honey-colored scab or appearance.	
24.	Intradermal	This is a medication or fluid administration route, indicating just below or under the epidermis.	
25.	Jaundice	Yellowing of the whites of the eyes and skin caused by increased bilirubin in the blood, generally due to liver disease, obstructed bile duct, or red blood cell breakdown.	
26.	Keloid	Thick tissue formation at the site of an injury or scar.	
27.	Laceration	A tear or deep cut in the surface of the skin.	
28.	Lesion	A wound in the skin leading to changes in tissue appearance or function.	
29.	Melanoma	A serious type of skin cancer characterized by the unusual growth of new or existing moles.	
30.	Necrosis	Organ or tissue cellular death caused by injury, disease, or blocked blood flow.	
31.	Birthmark	Another term for mole; characterized by the appearance of a raised red or brown mark on the skin.	
32.	Onychomycosis	A nail infection caused by fungal growth, characterized by a thickened, brittle, discolored nail.	
33.	Percutaneous	Something performed or occurring through the skin.	
34.	Pruritus	Severe itching.	
35.	Psoriasis	A chronic condition marked by red, scaly patches on the skin.	
36.	Purpura	A purple spotted rash caused by rupture of small blood vessels, leading to bleeding under the skin.	
37.	Pustule	A blister or raised pimple on the skin that is filled with pus.	
38.	Ringworm	A contagious fungal infection of the skin and scalp. It is not caused by a worm.	

39.	Rosacea	The enlargement of facial blood vessels, causing a flushed appearance to the nose and cheeks.	
40.	Scabies	A contagious skin condition caused by mites and characterized by tiny red spots that itch.	
41.	Scleroderma	Sclerosis or hardening of the skin and connective tissues just under the skin, which may contract.	
42.	Seborrhea	Excessive oily discharge from skin glands.	
43.	Skin graft	A surgical procedure in which a healthy piece of skin is removed and transplanted to another site on the body.	
44.	Squamous cell carcinoma	A form of skin cancer characterized by the rapid growth of abnormal cells in the epidermal squamous cells; it can be malignant and metastasize to other parts of the body.	
45.	Subcutaneous	Pertaining to below or under the skin.	
46.	Tissue	A collection of similar cells and products that form a structure with a function.	
47.	Transdermal	Applying or administering medication through the skin, generally by way of a patch, in order to be absorbed slowly over a long period.	
48.	Ulcer	A breakage of the skin or open sore that will not heal.	
49.	Wart	A small hard growth on the skin caused by human papillomavirus. Warts usually appear on hands and fingers.	
50.	Wheal	Also known as welt, this is a swollen, red spot with a white center that appears on the skin due to an allergic reaction or insect bite; an individual hive.	

Notes:

- 5. Bedsores are also called pressure sores or pressure ulcers.
- 9. A cyst is also known as a vesicle.
- 22. Hives are also called urticaria in English.

Key Word Parts:

derm/o	skin
-al	Pertaining to; as in epidermal pertains to the epidermis
onych/o	nail
trich/o	hair
-tome	Instrument used to cut