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Australian Nurses’ Dictionary
5th edition

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The publisher would like to thank the American College of Surgeons for their kind permission to reproduce the figure in the Lund and Browder chart.

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Preface

The Australian Nurses’ Dictionary was first adapted from the Baillière’s Nurses’ Dictionary in 1991 and over the past 20 years we have seen the face of nursing change as our knowledge base has expanded to incorporate advances in technology, research and innovation. This 5th edition of the Australian Nurses’ Dictionary aims to keep abreast of changing terminology and the shared professional language for nurses and other health professionals. The dictionary is available for the first time as an e-book, making it an easily accessible resource in the ever-developing digital world. It has been expanded to include new, relevant terminologies and an appendix highlighting the change to national registration for nurses and midwives.

The guiding principles in the revision have been to establish direct relevance to Australian conditions, and to provide a quick reference source for students and nurses in the clinical setting. For a more extensive background to specific entries, the reader is referred to encyclopaedic nursing dictionaries.

This edition has relied upon the support of nurses and allied health personnel in many areas. In particular, the authors would like to thank the team of contributors for their continued support in the revisions of the appendices: Andrea Marshall, Terry Maunsell, Anne Louise Elsom and Marjorie Atchan. Thank you to the reviewers of the 4th edition, who provided valuable recommendations for this 5th edition; thank you also to the reviewers of the 5th edition; and to Tony Smith and John Hawley for their continued encouragement and support in meeting deadlines.

Jennie King, Rhonda Hawley
Pronunciation guide

All pronunciations in this dictionary are transcribed using ordinary English-spelling letters, with the exception of the upside-down ‘e’ or ‘schwa’ (ə). All pronunciations are given in parentheses immediately following the bold headword and reflect general Australian English in current, spoken usage. Where alternative pronunciations for a word are given, or where alternative spellings or synonyms are given, these are separated by commas. For example:

medicine (ˈmedəsən, _medsən)  
erone (neuron) (ˌnyoo·rohn, _nyoo·ron)

Alternative pronunciations are often given in truncated form with hyphens. For example:

encephalic (ˈenkə·fəlik, -ˌensə-)

Single letters represent single sounds. Where two or more characters are combined, as in the lists below, these also represent precise sounds.

Vowel sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>as in bad (bad)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ah</td>
<td>as in father (ˈfahdha)</td>
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<td>as in hair (hair)</td>
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<td>aw</td>
<td>as in water (ˈwawtə)</td>
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<td>as in bite (biet)</td>
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<td>iə</td>
<td>as in chloropsia (kławˈropsiə)</td>
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<td>iə ə</td>
<td>as in fear (fia)</td>
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<td>iəə</td>
<td>as in diet (ˈdīeət)</td>
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Consonant sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
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<td>as in <em>digit</em> (ˈdijət)</td>
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<td>f</td>
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<td>ny</td>
<td>as in <em>nutrition</em> (nyooˈtrishən)</td>
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<td>v</td>
<td>as in <em>vein</em> (vayn)</td>
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<td>w</td>
<td>as in <em>weight</em> (wayt)</td>
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<td>z</td>
<td>as in <em>zero</em> (ˈziərəh)</td>
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<tr>
<td>zh</td>
<td>as in <em>pleasure</em> (ˈplezhə)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Stress marks

Stress marks are used where the word or term has more than one syllable. The stress mark is placed before the syllable to be stressed. The primary stressed syllable is indicated by a superior stress mark (ˈ) and secondary stress by a subscript stress mark (ˌ). For example:

-respiration (ˌrespəˈrayʃən)
-respirator (ˈrespə raytə)
-respiratory (rəsˈpɪrətəri)

Apostrophe

Where a consonant is preceded by an apostrophe, this indicates that the consonant should be pronounced as a separate syllable. For example:

-hospital (ˈhospəl)'

Centred full stop

Where two letters occur together that may be mistaken for a different sound from that intended, a centred full stop is added to separate the characters. For example:

-myopia (miəˈohpiə)
Sub-entries

Sub-entries are listed alphabetically under the main entry, with the initial letter(s) of the main entry repeated. For example:

*abdomen*
  *Acute a.*
  *Pendulous a.*
  *Scaphoid (navicular) a.*
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A abbreviation for accommodation; adenine; anode (anodal); anterior; axial; symbol for ampere and mass number.

abacterial (ˌəbəˈkɑːrɪəl) indicating a condition not caused by bacteria.

abarticulation (ˌəbəˈtɑːkəˈlən) dislocation of a joint.

abasia (əˈbæzɪə) the inability to walk.

abatement (əˈbeɪtmənt) a decrease in the severity of a pain or a symptom.

abdomen (ˈæbəmən, ˈæbˈdoh-) the belly. The cavity between the diaphragm and the pelvis, lined by a serous membrane, the peritoneum, and containing the stomach, intestines, liver, gallbladder, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, suprarenal glands, ureters and bladder. For descriptive purposes, its area may be divided into nine regions (see figure). Acute a. any abdominal condition urgently requiring treatment, usually surgical. Pendulous a. a condition in which the anterior part of the abdominal wall hangs down over the pubis. Scaphoid (navicular) a. a hollowing of the anterior wall commonly seen in grossly emaciated people.

abdominal (abˈdəmənl) pertaining to the abdomen. A. aneurysm a dilation of the abdominal aorta. A. aorta that part of the aorta below the diaphragm. A. breathing deep breathing;

Regions of the abdomen

Hypermnoea. A. examination a systematic examination of the abdomen by inspection, palpation and auscultation carried out by midwives during pregnancy and after delivery. The purpose is to determine the equality of uterine size with the calculated period of gestation and later in the pregnancy to determine the position of the
fetus. Postnatally the examination is used to ascertain that the uterus is regaining its former non-pregnant size and position. *A. reflex* reflex contraction of abdominal wall muscles observed when skin is lightly stroked. *A. section* incision through the abdominal wall. *A. thrust*, see HEIMLICH MANŒUVRE.

abdominocyesis *(abˌdomənəˈkəsɨz) an abdominal pregnancy.*

abdominopelvic *(abˌdomənəˈpĕlvık) concerning the abdomen and the pelvic cavity.*

abdominoperineal *(abˌdomənəˌperəˈnēəl) pertaining to the abdomen and the perineum. *A. excision* an operation performed through the abdomen and the perineum for the excision of the rectum or bladder. Often done as a synchronised operation by two surgeons, one working at each approach.

abduce *(abˌdyoos) to abduct (or draw away).*

abducent *(abˌdyoosənt) leading away from the midline. *A. muscle* the external rectus muscle of the eye, which rotates it outwards. *A. nerve* the cranial nerve that supplies this muscle.

abduction *(abˌdəkʃən, əb-)* movement of a limb away from the body.

abductor *(abˌduktə) a muscle that draws a limb away from the midline of the body. The opposite of ADDUCTOR.*

aberrant *(əˈberənt) taking an unusual course. Used of blood vessels and nerves.*

aberration *(əˈberətʃən) deviation from the normal. In optics, failure to focus rays of light. *Mental a.* mental disorder of an unspecified kind.

ability *(əˈbilətē) the power to perform an act, either mental or physical, with or without training. *A. test* a measure of a person’s level of performance or estimates future performance. Sometimes also known as an intelligence test, achievement test or aptitude test. *Innate a.* the ability with which a person is born.

ablation *(abˌlāshən) removal or destruction, by surgical or radiological means, of neoplasms or other body tissue. *Catheter a.* a technique to interrupt conduction through accessory atrioventricular pathways and ablate arrhythmogenic foci responsible for TACHYCARDIA.

abnormal *(əˈnərməl) varying from what is regular or usual.*

ABO system see BLOOD GROUPS.

abort *(əˈbawt) 1. to terminate a process or disease before it has run its normal course. 2. remove or expel from the womb an embryo or fetus before it is capable of independent existence.*

abortifacient *(əˌbawtiˈfayshənt) an agent or drug that may induce abortion.*

abortion *(əˈbawshən) 1. premature cessation of a normal process. 2. emptying of the pregnant uterus before the end of the 24th week. 3. the product of such an abortion. *Complete a.* one in which the contents of the uterus are expelled intact. *Criminal a.* the termination of a pregnancy for reasons other than those permitted by law (i.e. danger to mental or physical health of mother or child or family) and without medical approval. *Incomplete a.* that in which some part of the fetus or placenta is retained in the uterus. *Induced a.* the intentional emptying of the uterus. *Inevitable a.*
abortion where bleeding is profuse and accompanied by pains and the cervix is dilated and the contents of the uterus may be felt. Missed a. one where all signs of pregnancy disappear and later the uterus discharges a blood clot surrounding a shrunken fetus, i.e. a CARNEOUS MOLE. Septic a. abortion associated with infection. Spontaneous a. a miscarriage or the unintended termination of a pregnancy before the end of the 20th week. Therapeutic (legal) a. one induced on medical advice because the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or because there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped. Threatened a. the appearance of signs of premature expulsion of the fetus; bleeding is slight, the cervix is closed. Tubal a. the termination of a tubal pregnancy caused by rupture of the uterine tube.

abruption (ə ˈbrayzhən) a superficial injury where the skin or mucous membrane is rubbed or torn. Corneal a. condition in which the surface of the cornea has been removed, e.g. by a scratch or other injury.

abreaction (əˈbreɪkʃən) the reliving of a past painful experience, with the release of repressed emotion.

abruptio placenta (əˈbrupshioˈplæntə) premature detachment of the placenta, causing maternal shock, and fetal compromise or demise.

abscess (ˈabsəs) a collection of pus in a cavity. Caused by the disintegration and replacement of tissue damaged by mechanical, chemical or bacterial injury. Alveolar a. an abscess in a tooth socket. Brodie’s a. a bone abscess, usually on the head of the tibia. Cold a. the result of chronic tubercular infection; and so called because there are few, if any, signs of inflammation. Psoas a. a cold abscess that has tracked down the psoas muscle from caries of the lumbar vertebrae. Subphrenic a. an abscess situated under the diaphragm.

absorbent (əˈsərbənt, -ˈzər-) 1. able to take in, or suck up and incorporate. 2. a tissue structure involved in absorption. 3. a substance that absorbs or promotes absorption.

absorption (əˈsərpʃən, -ˈzər-) 1. in physiology, the taking up by suction of fluids or other substances by the tissues of the body. 2. in psychology, great mental concentration on a single object or activity. 3. in radiology, uptake of radiation by body tissues.

abstinence (əˈstɪnst) a refraining from the use of (or indulgence in) food, stimulants or coitus. A. syndrome withdrawal symptoms.

abstract (ˈæstrakt) a brief, comprehensive summary of a research study or other academic report.

abuse (əˈbyooʊs) misuse, maltreatment or excessive use — may be physical, sexual, psychological or neglect. Can apply to any group of people, e.g. the vulnerable, children, women, people with learning disabilities or the elderly. May also apply to the misuse of power, authority, drugs and other substances, e.g. solvents and equipment. Child a.
the non-accidental use of physical force or the non-accidental act of omission by a parent or other custodian responsible for the care of a child. Drug a. use of illegal drugs or misuse of prescribed drugs. Solvent a. the deliberate inhalation of volatile chemicals with the aim of inducing intoxication.

Acanthoma (ˌa·kanˈθohmə) a tumour originating in the prickle cell layer of the epidermis; usually benign epithelial tumours.

Acanthosis (ˌa·kanˈθohsɪs) hyperplasia of the prickle cell layer of the epidermis, as seen in psoriasis.

Acaricide (aˈkarisɪd) an agent that destroys mites.

Acarus (ˈa·kə·rəs) a genus of small mites. A scabiei (Sarcoptes scabiei) the cause of scabies.

Acataphasia (ˌaˌkəˈfə·ziˈə) loss of the ability to express connected thought, resulting from a cerebral lesion.

Acceleration (ak ˌseləˈreɪʃən) 1. an increase in the speed or velocity of an object or reaction. 2. an increase in the fetal heartbeat of at least 15 beats per minute over the baseline rate for at least 15 seconds.

Accessory (akˈˈsesərɪ, ˈɒk-) supplementary. A. nerve the 11th cranial nerve. It is made up of two portions: the cranial and the spinal.

Accident and emergency (ˈækˌsēˈdeɪnt) sometimes referred to as casualty or trauma medicine. A setting for dealing with problems which require immediate attention and where patients may be directed or referred by a general practitioner or the emergency services.

Accident form a form also known as an incident form which provides a record of any accident to any person occurring in a healthcare premise. Employers require that the form is completed as soon after the accident as possible.

Accommodation (əˌkoməˈdeɪʃən) adjustment. In ophthalmology, the term refers specifically to adjustment of the ciliary muscle, which controls the shape of the lens. In negative a. the ciliary muscle relaxes and the lens becomes less convex, giving long distance vision; in positive a. the ciliary muscle contracts and the lens becomes more convex, giving near vision.

Accouchement (əˈkouʃmən) [Fr.] childbirth.

Accoucheur (əˈkoʊʃər) [Fr.] the person who assists the woman during childbirth.

Accountable (əˈkɒntəbl) liable to be held responsible for a course of action. A qualified nurse has a duty of care according to law; in nursing, being accountable refers to the responsibility the qualified nurse takes for prescribing and initiating nursing care. Nurses are accountable to their patients, their peers and their employing authority, according to professional codes of conduct.

Accreditation (əˈkrɛdɪˈteɪʃən) 1. to give someone official status within an organisation, e.g. an approved and acknowledged representative of a union or professional organisation. 2. the official system used in some countries for the licensing of a hospital or healthcare facility by government agencies which meet agreed standards following initial assessment and regular appraisal that they meet a satisfactory level of organisational achievement. A. for Prior Learning (APL) a system
used by academic institutions and other establishments to grant credit for previous academic achievements. Usually used to gain credit transfer between institutions leading to academic qualifications.

accretion (əˈkreʃən) growth. The accumulation of deposits (e.g. of salts) to form a calculus in the bladder. In dentistry, the growth of tartar on the teeth.

acclimation (əˈkloʊʃən) the process by which a person absorbs the beliefs, values and customs of another culture, usually through direct contact, e.g. migrants resident in another country.

ACE inhibitors (əˈhɪbətəz) a group of drugs used in the treatment of hypertension. The name ‘angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors’ explains part of their mode of action, although it is thought that some of their other actions may also be important in reducing blood pressure.

acephalic (ˌaɪkəˈfælik, -sə-) without a head.

acet- (əˈsət-) combining form denoting acid. From the Latin acetum, vinegar.

acetabuloplasty (ˌəˈseɪtəbələˈplæs.ti) an operation performed to improve the depth and shape of the hip socket in correcting congenital dislocation of the hip or in treating osteoarthritis of the hip (see figure above).

acetabulum (ˌəˈseɪtəbələm) the cup-like socket in the innominate bone, in which the head of the femur moves.

acetate (əˈseɪt) a salt of ACETIC ACID.

acetazolamide (əˌseɪtəˈzoʊleɪd) a sulfonamide compound which is an oral diuretic and is used in the treatment of congestive heart failure and GLAUCOMA.

acetic acid (əˈseɪtɪk ˈæsəd) the acid of vinegar. It may be used as an antidote to alkaline poisons.

acetoacetic acid (ˌəˈsətəhəˈsətɪk ˈæsəd, əˌsee-) diacetic acid. A product of fat metabolism. It occurs in excessive amounts in diabetes and starvation, giving rise to acetone bodies in the urine.

acetonaemia (ˌəˈseɪtəˈneemiə, əˌsee-) the presence of acetone bodies in the blood.

acetone (əˌseɪtən) a colourless flammable liquid with a characteristic odour. Traces are found in the blood and in normal urine. A. bodies ketones found in the blood and urine of patients with uncontrolled diabetes and also in those with acute starvation as a result of the incomplete breakdown of fatty and amino acids.

acetonuria (ˌəˈseɪtəˈnoʊrəˈsə, əˌsee-) the presence of an excess quantity of acetone bodies in the urine, giving it a peculiar sweet smell.

acetylcholine (əˌseɪtiˈkələˌkoʊleen, əˌsɪtɪl-) a chemical transmitter that is released by some nerve endings
at the synapse between one neurone and the next or between a nerve ending and the effector organ it supplies. These nerves are said to be cholinergic, e.g. the parasympathetic nerves and the lower motor neurones to skeletal muscles. Acetylcholine is rapidly destroyed in the body by cholinesterase (an enzyme).

**acetylcholinesterase** (ˌasətəl-ˌkohlən ˈestə-rayz) an enzyme that reduces or prevents excessive firing of neurons at neuromuscular junctions.

**acetylcoenzyme A** (ˌasətəlko-ˈenziəm, ˌasəˈtəl-) active form of acetic acid, to which carbohydrates, fats and amino acids that are not needed for protein synthesis are converted.

**achalasia** (akəˈlayziə) failure of relaxation of a muscle sphincter, causing dilatation of the part above, e.g. of the oesophagus above the cardiac sphincter (see figure).

**ache** (ayk) a dull, continuous pain.

**Achilles** (əˈkiiliz) Greek mythological hero who could be wounded only in the heel. A. _tendon_ tendocalcaneus, connecting the soleus and gastrocnemius muscles of the calf to the heel bone (os calcis). Tapping the _Achilles tendon_ normally produces the _Achilles reflex_ (or ankle jerk).

**achlorhydria** (əˈklɔrˈhɛdriə) the absence of free hydrochloric acid in the stomach. May be found in pernicious anaemia, pellagra and gastric cancer.

**acholia** (əˈkohlə-) a lack of secretion of bile.

**achlorhagia** (əˈklɔrˈhæʒiə) absence of hydrochloric acid and enzymes in the gastric secretions. A. _gastrica_ a condition in which gastric secretion is reduced or absent.

**acidolovir** (ayˈsiekloʊvɪr) an antiviral agent used to treat HERPES viruses. Uses include the treatment of varicella (Herpes zoster) and Herpes
ACNE

simplex. It is effective only if started at the onset of the infection. May also be used as prophylaxis in immunocompromised persons and for prevention of recurrence. It is available as a cream, ophthalmic ointment, suspension, tablets and intravenous infusion.

acid (ˈ asəd) 1. sour or sharp in taste. 2. a substance which, when combined with an alkali, will form a salt. Any acid substance will turn blue litmus paper red. Individual acids are given under their specific names A.–alcohol-fast descriptive of stained bacteria that are resistant to decolourisation by both acid and alcohol. A.–base balance the normal ratio between the acid ions and the basic (or alkaline) ions required to maintain the pH of the blood and body fluids. Most of the body’s metabolic processes produce acids as their end products, but a somewhat alkaline body fluid is required as a medium for vital cellular activities. Therefore, chemical exchanges of hydrogen ions must take place continuously in order to maintain a state of equilibrium. An optimal pH (hydrogen ion concentration) between 7.35 and 7.45 must be maintained; otherwise, the enzyme systems and other biochemical and metabolic activities will not function normally.

acidaemia (ˌasəˈdeimə) abnormal acidity of blood that contains an excess of hydrogen ions, in which the pH of the blood falls below 7.35.

acidity (əˈsidətē) 1. sourness or sharpness of taste. 2. the state of being acid.

acidosia (ˌasəˈdoʊsə) a pathological condition resulting from accumulation of acid or depletion of the alkaline reserve (bicarbonate content) in the blood and body tissues, and characterised by increase in hydrogen ion concentration (decrease in pH to below 7.30). Metabolic a. acidosis resulting from accumulation in the blood of ketoacids (derived from fat metabolism) at the expense of bicarbonate, thus diminishing the body’s ability to neutralise acids. Occurs in diabetic ketoacidosis, lactic acidosis and failure of renal tubules to reabsorb bicarbonate. Respiratory a. acidosis resulting from ventilatory impairment and subsequent retention of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide accumulates in the blood and unites with water to form carbonic acid. Occurs with severe birth asphyxia and other respiratory conditions affecting the newborn. See also KETOSIS.

acidotic (ˌasəˈdotik) 1. pertaining to acidosis. 2. a person suffering from acidosis.

acinus (ˌasəˈnəs) a minute saccule or alveolus of a compound gland, lined by secreting cells. The secreting portion of the mammary gland consists of acini.

acme (ˈ akmē) 1. the peak or highest point, e.g. the peak of intensity of a uterine contraction during labour. 2. the crisis of a fever when the symptoms are fully developed.

acne (ˈaknee) an inflammatory condition of the sebaceous glands in which blackheads (comedones) are usually present together with papules and pustules. A. keratitis inflammation of the cornea associated with acne rosacea. A. rosacea a redness of the forehead, nose and cheeks due to chronic dilatation of the subcutaneous capillaries,
which becomes permanent with the formation of pustules in the affected areas. *A. vulgaris* a form of acne that occurs commonly in adolescents and young adults, affecting the face, chest and back.

**acneiform** (akˈnee·əˌfawm) resembling acne.

**acousma** (əˈkooςmə) the hearing of imaginary sounds.

**acoustic** (əˈkoostik) relating to sound or the sense of hearing.

**acquired** (əˈkwı̊d) pertaining to disease, habits or immunity developed after birth; not inherited.

**acquired immune deficiency syndrome** see AIDS.

**acrid** (ˈakrid) bitter; pungent; irritating.

**acrocephalia** (ˌakrohkeˈfiələ) malformation of the head, in which the top is pointed.

**acrocyanosis** (ˌakrohˌsiəˈnɔsəs) persistent cyanosis, coldness of the hands and feet, and profuse sweating of the digits; often associated with a vasomotor defect. This is a common finding for newborn babies in the first 48 hours.

**acrodynia** (ˌakrohˈdiniə) an allergic reaction to mercury in children, causing pain and erythema in the fingers and toes. Pink disease.

**acromegaly** (ˌakrohˈmeɡəlē) a chronic condition producing gradual enlargement of the hands, feet and bones of the head and chest. Associated with overactivity of the anterior lobe of the pituitary gland in adults.

**acromioclavicular** (əˈkrohmiohˈkləˌvikələ) pertaining to the joint between the acromion process of the scapula and the lateral aspect of the clavicle.

**acromion** (əˈkrohməˈɔn) the outward projection of the spine of the scapula, forming the point of the shoulder.

**acroosteolysis** (əˌkrohˌoʊstekˈəˌlaɪsəs) an occupational disease that affects people working with polyvinylchloride (PVC) plastics.

**acroparaesthesia** (ˌakrohˌpærəˈtheəzəˌə) condition in which pressure on the nerves of the brachial plexus causes numbness, pain and tingling of the hand and forearm.

**acrophobia** (ˌakrohˌfoʊbəˌə) morbid terror of being at a height.

**acrosclerosis** (ˌakrohˈskləˌroʊsəs) a type of SCLERODERMA that affects the hands, feet, face or chest.

**acroscope** (əˈkrəˌsȯhm) part of the head of a spermatozoon containing enzymes that break down the cell membrane of the ovum and allow penetration.

**ACTH** adrenocorticotropic hormone; corticotrophin.

**actigraph** (ˈaktəˌgraf) an instrument that records changes in the activity of an organism and produces a graphic record of the process.

**actin** (ˈaktən) the protein of myofibrils responsible for contraction and relaxation of muscles.

**actinism** (ˈaktəˌnizəm) the ability of rays of light to produce chemical changes.

**actinodermatitis** (ˌaktəˌnohˌdərməˈtietəs) inflammation of the skin due to the action of ultraviolet or X-rays.

**Actinomyces** (ˌaktəˌnəˌməsəˌz) a genus of branching, spore-forming, vegetable parasites which may give rise to actinomycosis and from which many antibiotic drugs are produced, e.g. streptomycin.

**actinomycin** (ˌaktəˌnəˌməsəˌn) a group of cytotoxic drugs used in the treatment of malignant disease.

**actinomycosis** (ˌaktəˌnəˌməsəˌkəsəs)
a chronic infective disease of cattle that is also found in humans. Granulated tumours occur, chiefly in the lung and jaw, and more rarely in the intestines.

**actinotherapy** (ˌaktənoʊˈθerəpi) treatment of disease by rays of light, e.g. artificial sunlight.

**action** (ˈækʃən) the accomplishment of an effect, whether mechanical or chemical, or the effect so produced. 

**A. research** a method of undertaking social research that incorporates the researcher’s involvement as a direct and deliberate part of the research process, i.e. the researcher acts as a change agent. 

**Cumulative a.** the sudden and markedly increased action of a drug after administration of several doses. 

**Reflex a.** an involuntary response to a stimulus conveyed to the nervous system and reflected to the periphery, passing below the level of consciousness (*see also* **REFLEX**). 

**activator** (ˌaktəˈvaytə) a substance, hormone or enzyme that stimulates a chemical change, although it may not take part in the change. In chemistry, a catalyst. For example, yeast is the activator in the process by which sugar is converted into alcohol; the digestive secretions are activated by hormones to carry out normal digestion. 

**active** (ˈaktiv) causing change; energetic. 

**A. immunity** an immunity in which individuals have been stimulated to produce their own antibodies. 

**A. labour** the normal progress of the birth process, including uterine contractions, dilation of the cervix to at least 3–4 cm, and the descent of the fetus into the birth canal. 

**A. listening** the act of alert, intentional hearing and demonstration of an interest in what a person has to say through verbal signs, non-verbal gestures and body language. 

**A. movements** movements made by the patient, as distinct from passive movements. 

**A. principle** the ingredient in a drug that is primarily responsible for its therapeutic action. 

**A. transport** the movement of ions or molecules across the cell membranes and epithelial layers, usually against a concentration gradient, resulting directly from the expenditure of metabolic energy. Under normal circumstances more potassium ions are present within the cell and more sodium ions extracellularly. The process of maintaining these normal differences in electrolytic composition between the intracellular fluids is active transport. The process differs from simple diffusion or osmosis in that it requires the expenditure of metabolic energy. 

**activities of daily living (ADL)** (akˈtivətiz əˈdaylee ˈliving) those activities usually performed in the course of a person’s normal daily routine, such as eating, toileting, dressing, washing and dressing or cleaning teeth; forms part of a functional health assessment. 

**activities of living (AL)** (akˈtivətiz əˈliving) those activities which meet the physical, psychological and social needs of the individual, e.g. eating, elimination, communication, breathing, expressing sexuality, working, play, etc. 

**activity theory** describes a psycho-social process whereby ageing people disengage from some activities of their earlier life and replace these with other hobbies and pastimes, according to their
activity tolerance (ˌakˈtivtē ˈtōlərəns) the amount of physical activity tolerated by a patient. It may be assessed in patients with cardiac or chronic respiratory disease. Graded exercise, including walking, cycling and going up and down stairs, may be used to rebuild confidence during the convalescent phase after any serious illness or injury as an important part of any rehabilitation program.

actomyosin (ˌaktəˈmiəsən) muscle protein complex; the myosin component acts as an enzyme which causes the release of energy.

acuity (əˈkyootē) sharpness. A. of hearing an acute perception of sound. A. of vision clear focusing ability.

acupressure (ˌakəˈpreshə) a system of complementary medicine in which pressure is applied to various points on the body to stimulate the innate self-healing capacity of the individual. See ACUPUNCTURE, SHIATSU.

acupuncture (ˌakəˈpunchə) a Chinese medical system which aims to diagnose illness and promote health by stimulating the body’s self-healing powers. The insertion of special needles into specific points along the ‘meridians’ of the body is used for the production of anaesthesia, the relief of pain and the treatment of certain conditions.

acute (əˈkyoot) a term applied to a disease in which the attack is sudden, severe and of short duration.

acute physiology and chronic health evaluation see APACHE.

acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) (ˌaˈkyoot ˌrəˈspirətəri distres ˈsinˌdros) a severe form of acute lung function failure which occurs after an event such as trauma, inhalation of a toxic substance or septic shock. There is severe breathlessness and a dangerous reduction in the supply of oxygen to the blood.

acute stress disorder (ˌaˈkyoot strɛsˌdəˈsawdə) an anxiety disorder that is usually transient which occurs within 4 weeks following exposure or involvement to a traumatic event. The staff of the emergency services may be affected, e.g. following a major road traffic incident.

acyclic (əˈsieklik) occurring independently of a natural cycle of events such as the menstrual cycle.

adactylia (ˌədəˈktiliə) congenital absence of fingers or toes.

Adam’s apple (əˈdemz) the laryngeal prominence, a protrusion of the front of the neck formed by the thyroid cartilage.

adamantine (ˌəˈdəˈmɑntin, -tən) pertaining to the enamel of the teeth.

adaptation (ˌədəˈpətəshən) 1. the process of modification that a living organism undergoes when adjusting itself to new surroundings or circumstances. 2. adaptation was understood by the nurse theorist Roy (1976) as being a function of the stimulus to which the individual is exposed and of the individual’s adaptation to the situation. Roy maintained that there are four modes of adaptation: physiological needs, role functions, ‘self’ concept and interdependence relations. 3. the process of overcoming difficulties and adjusting to changing circumstances. Neuroses and psychoses are often associated with failure of adaptation. 4. used in ophthalmology to mean the adjustment of visual
function according to the ambient illumination. *Colour a. 1. changes in visual perception of colour with prolonged stimulation. 2. adjustment of vision to degree of brightness or colour tone of illumination. Dark a. adaptation of the eye to vision in reduced illumination. Light a. adaptation of the eye to vision in bright illumination (photopia), with reduction in the concentration of the photosensitive pigments of the eye.*

**addict** (ˈadikt) a person exhibiting addiction.

**addiction** (əˈdikshən) 1. the taking of drugs or alcohol leading to physiological and psychological dependence with a tendency to increase use. 2. the state of being devoted to a particular activity or interest, e.g. gambling or computer games to the exclusion of the normal activities of daily living. See dependence and drug addiction.


**Addison’s disease** (ˈadiˌsənz dīˈzēz) deficiency disease caused by partial or complete failure of adrenocortical function. There is wasting, brown pigmentation of the skin and extreme debility.

**Addisonian crisis** see adrenal crisis.

**additives** (ˈadə tivz) substances added to improve, enhance or preserve something. *Food a. used in the food industry to preserve and make the food look more attractive; these are given serial numbers, e.g. E102 (tartrazine), E476 (soya lecithin). Some additives may produce an allergic reaction in some people, and a few are thought to be implicated in behavioural problems in children.*

**adducent** (əˈdyoosənt) leading towards the midline. *A. muscle* the medial rectus muscle of the eye, which turns it inwards.

**adduction** (əˈdukshan) movement of a limb towards the body.

**adductor** (əˈduktoʊ) a muscle that draws a limb towards the midline of the body. The opposite of abductor.

**adenectomy** (əˈnɛktəmē) excision of a gland.

**adenine** (əˈnɛn) one of the purine bases found in DNA.

**adenitis** (əˈnɛtəs) inflammation of a gland.

**adenocarcinoma** (ədənəh kahsəˈnoʊmə) a malignant new growth of glandular epithelial tissue.

**adenofibroma** (ədənəˌfəbrəmə) a benign tumour of connective tissue which contains glandular structures.

**adenohypophysis** (ədənəˌhipləˈfəsəz) the anterior lobe of the pituitary gland.

**adenoid** (əˈnoyd) resembling a gland. Generally applied to abnormal lymphoid growth in the nasopharynx (see figure, p. 12).

**adenoidectomy** (ədəˈnɔɪdəktəmē) the surgical removal of adenoid tissue from the nasopharynx.

**adenoma** (ədəˈnɔmə) a non-malignant tumour of glandular tissue.

**adenomatome** (ədəˈnɔmətəm) an instrument for the removal of adenoids.

**adenomyoma** (ədənəˈməʊmə) an innocent new growth involving both endometrium and muscle tissue; found in the uterus or uterine ligaments.

**adenopathy** (əˌdənəˈpəθi) enlargement of any gland, especially those of the lymphatic system.

**adenosarcoma** (ədənəˌsərkoʊmə) a malignant tumour of connective
ADENOSCLEROSIS

Adenoid growth and glandular tissue. *Embryonal a.* 
See ‘NEPHROBLASTOMA.’

**adenosclerosis** (ˌadənəskləˈrōsəs) hardening of a gland. Usually the result of calcification.

**adenosine** (aˈdənəˌsēn) a nucleoside consisting of adenine and D-ribose (a pentose sugar). *A. triphosphate* (ATP) compound containing three phosphoric acids. It is present in all cells and serves as a store for energy.

**adenosis** (ˌadəˈnōsəs) a disease in a gland.

**adenovirus** (ˌadənəˈvīrəs) a virus of the Adenoviridae family. Many types have been isolated, some of which cause respiratory tract infections, while others are associated with conjunctivitis, epidemic keratoconjunctivitis and gastrointestinal infections.

**ADH** antidiuretic hormone. Vasopressin. *See also ANTI DIURETIC.*

**adhesion** (əˈhēzhən) union between two surfaces normally separated. Usually the result of inflammation when fibrous tissue forms, e.g. peritonitis may cause adhesions between organs. A possible cause of intestinal obstruction.

**adiaphoresis** (əˈdiəˈfərəsəs) deficiency in secretion of sweat.

**adiaphoretic** (əˈdiəˈfərətik) an antidihidrotic agent. A drug that prevents the secretion of sweat.

**adipocele** (ˈadəpəkəl) a hernia, with the sac containing fatty tissue.

**adipose** (ˌadəˈpōs) of the nature of fat. Fatty.

**adiposity** (ˌadəˈpōsətee) the state of being too fat. Obesity.

**adiposuria** (ˌadəpəˈsoorēə) the presence of fat in the urine. *See LIPURIA.*

**aditus** (əˈdētəs) an opening or passageway; often applied to that between the middle ear and the mastoid antrum.

**adjustment** (əˈdʒəstmənt) in psychology, the ability of a person to adapt to changing circumstances or environment.

**adjuvant** (əˈdʒəvənt) 1. any treatment used in conjunction with another to enhance its efficacy. 2. a substance administered with a drug to enhance its effect.

**ADL** see ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING.

**Adler’s theory** (əˈdlerz) A. Adler, Austrian psychiatrist, 1870–1937. The theory that neuroses develop as a compensation for feelings of inferiority, either social or physical.

**adnexa** (əˈnēksə) appendages. *Uterine a.* the ovaries and tubes.

**adolescence** (ˌadəˈlesəns) the period between puberty and maturity. In the male, 14–25 years. In the female, 12–21 years.

**adopt** (əˈdəpt) 1. to take a person, especially another’s child, into a legal relationship as one’s own. 2. to choose to follow a course of action.
adoption (əˈdopshən) the legal procedure by which a child is transferred from his or her birth parents to adopting parents.

adrenal (əˈdreenəl) 1. near the kidneys. 2. a triangular endocrine gland situated above each kidney. A. cortex the outer and greater portion of the adrenal gland. A. crisis an acute life-threatening state of profound adrenocortical insufficiency requiring immediate therapy. Called also Addisonian crisis.

adrenalectomy (əˈdreenə lektəmē) surgical excision of adrenal gland.

adrenaline (əˈdrenəlin) a hormone secreted by the medulla of the adrenal gland. Has an action similar to normal stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system: (a) causing dilatation of the bronchioles; (b) raising the blood pressure by constriction of surface vessels and stimulation of the cardiac output; (c) releasing glycogen from the liver. It is therefore used to treat such conditions as asthma, collapse and hypoglycaemia. It acts as a haemostat in local anaesthetics. See EPINEPHRINE.

adrenergic (ədˈrɛnərjɪk) pertaining to nerves that release the chemical transmitter noradrenaline in order to stimulate the muscles and glands they supply.

adrenocortical (ə dreenəˈkawtɪkəl) pertaining to the adrenal cortex.

Adrenocorticotrophin (ə dreenəˈkawtɪkəˈtroʊfən) adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) secreted by the anterior lobe of the pituitary body. Stimulates the adrenal cortex to produce cortisol. See CORTICOTROPIN.

adrenogenital (ə dreenəˈjenətəl) relating to both the adrenal glands and the gonads. A. syndrome a condition of masculinisation caused by overactivity of the adrenal cortex resulting in precocious puberty in the male infant and masculinisation in the female. Both sexes are liable to Addisonian crises.

adrenolytic (əˈdreenəˈlɪtɪk) a drug that inhibits the stimulation of the sympathetic nerves and the activity of adrenaline.

adsorbent (adˈsawbənt, -ˈzawb-) a substance that has the power of attracting gas or fluid to itself, e.g. charcoal.

adsorption (adˈsawpʃən, -ˈzawp-) the power of certain substances to attach gases or other substances in solution to their surface and so concentrate them there. This is made use of in chromatography.

adult (əˈdəlt, ˈadəlt) mature. A mature person.

adulteration (əˈdʌltəˈrayshən) addition of an impure, cheap or unnecessary ingredient to cheat, cheapen or falsify a preparation.

advance directive or statement (ˌadˈvans directiv əˈstætˌmənt) a written declaration made by a mentally competent person, which sets out their wishes with regard to life-prolonging medical interventions if they are incapacitated by an irreversible disease or are terminally ill which prevents them making their wishes known to health professionals at the time. See LIVING WILL.

advanced life support (ALS) (ˌadˈvænstəfəl əˈpawt) resuscitation techniques used during a cardiac arrest that follows on from basic life support. They include defibrillation and the administration of appropriate drugs. Paediatric advanced life support ...
ADVANCED TRAUMA support (PALS) is a structured and algorithmic method of life support for children with severe medical emergencies.

**advanced trauma life support (ATLS)** (ˌədˈvanst træmə lif ˌsɔˈpawt) a set of protocols recommended for use by doctors and paramedics when dealing with seriously injured people at the scene of an accident. The immediate treatment of shock from reduced blood volume by the infusion of fluids is an integral component of the life support regimen.

**advancement** (ədˈvaŋsmənt, adˈvans-) in surgery, an operation to detach a tendon or muscle and reattach it further forward. Used in the treatment of STRABISMUS and plastic surgery.

**adventitia** (ˌədˈvəntishə, -ˈtishə) the outer coat of an artery or vein.

**adventitious** (ˌədˈventishəs) 1. accidental or acquired. 2. arising sporadically.

**advocacy** (ˈadvəkəsee) the process whereby a nurse provides a patient and/or the patient’s family with information to enable them to make informed decisions relating to the care situation. The nurse is then able to provide support vis-à-vis other professionals and also to incorporate the informed decisions into care planning.

**aeration** (airˈrayshən) supplying with air. Used to describe the oxygenation of blood, which takes place in the lungs.

**aerobe** (ˈair-rohb) an organism that may live and thrive only in the presence of oxygen.

**aerobic exercise** (ˈairˌəbik) physical exercise for which the degree of effort is such that it can be maintained for long periods without undue breathlessness. The aim of this form of exercising is to increase the effectiveness of the heart and lungs and the supply of oxygen to the tissues of the body.

**aeropathy** (airˈropəthee) commonly called the bends (decompression sickness).

**aerophagy** (airˈrofajee) excessive swallowing of air.

**aerosol** (ˈairˌəsəl) finely divided particles or droplets. A. sprays used in medicine to humidify air or oxygen, or for the administration of drugs by inhalation.

**Æsculapius** (ˈeeskyəˈlaypiəs, ‘es- ) the god of healing in Roman mythology.

**aetiology** (ˌeetiˈoləji) the science of the causes of disease.

**afebrile** (ayˈfiibril,-ˈfiibr-) without fever.

**affect** (əˈfekt) in psychiatry, the feeling experienced in connection with an emotion or mood.

**affection** (əˈfekʃən) 1. a morbid condition or disease state. 2. a warm feeling for someone or something.

**affective** (əˈfektiv) pertaining to the emotions or moods. A. psychoses major mental disorders in which there is grave disturbance of the emotions.

**afferent** (əˈfərənt) conveying towards the centre. A. nerves the sensory nerve fibres that convey impulses from the periphery towards the brain. A. paths or tracts the course of the sensory nerves up the spinal cord and through the brain. A. vessels arterioles entering the GLOMERULUS of the kidney, or lymphatics entering a lymph gland. See EFFERENT.

**affiliation** (əˈfileeˌayshən) the judicial decision about the paternity