

akkaepsdemgnirehpi
ceddecipheringmeds
piced**deciphering**me
peakkaepsdemgnireh
dspeakkaepsdemgnir
ehpi**eye disease**ring
medspeakkaepsdem
gnirehpiceddecipheri
ng**medspeak**kaepsde
mgnirehpiceddeciph
eringmedspeakkaeps
demgnirehpiceddecip

The Medical Library Association

has developed this pamphlet
to help you decipher some
common eye disease-related
“medspeak” terms. You’ll
also find some tips on how to
identify quality health care
information on the Internet.

Deciphering Eye Disease

Medspeak

A **ACCOMMODATION** – the ability of the lens of the eye to change shape to adjust for close or distance vision

ACUITY – clear, sharp vision

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD) – disease related to aging that gradually destroys central vision which is needed for seeing objects clearly and for reading, driving, etc.

AMBLYOPIA (also called lazy-eye or lazy-eye blindness) – the loss of one eye's ability to see details caused by lack of use of that eye in early childhood. As a result, one eye becomes stronger. Without early treatment, the weaker eye may become useless.

ASTIGMATISM – blurry vision can sometimes be caused by a misshapen cornea or lens (when the cornea is not as round as it should be normally). Astigmatism can be corrected with eyeglasses, contacts or, even surgery if the astigmatism is really severe.

B **BLEPHARITIS** – a common condition that causes inflammation of the eyelids. Symptoms include redness, swelling and itching

C **CATARACTS** – clouding of the eye's lens

CHALAZION – a small bump or cyst on the eyelid that is caused by inflammation of the meibomian gland, usually on the upper eyelid

COLOR BLINDNESS – inability to distinguish one color from another, particularly the primary colors, red, green and blue

COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME (CVS) – blurred vision or difficulty focusing as a result of looking at a computer screen for long periods of time; can be relieved by eye drops, corrective lenses or other treatments

CONJUNCTIVA – transparent membrane that covers the sclera which is the white part of the eye and the inside of the eyelids

CONJUNCTIVITIS (also called pink eye) – an inflammation of the conjunctiva. Symptoms may include pain, redness, itching and discharge.

CORNEA – strong, clear surface layer of the front of the eye that allows in light and works as part of the eye's focusing system

CORNEAL DYSTROPHY (also called Fuch's Dystrophy) – an inherited weakness of the cornea that may result in gradual loss of vision

CORNEAL ULCER – open sore on the cornea that can be caused by bacteria or irritation caused by small particles such as sand

D **DETACHED RETINA** – a disorder of the eye in which the retina separates from the back of the eye

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY – damage to the blood vessels in the retina

DRY EYE SYNDROME – a common condition due to not having enough tears to keep the eye comfortable and often the result of aging, medications or, even windy or dry weather

E **ECTROPION** – a droopy eyelid, usually due to aging and usually affects the lower eyelid

EPISCLERITIS – a swelling of the episclera, a membrane covering the eye's sclera or the white part of the eye

F **FARSIGHTEDNESS** – when objects that are far away are clear but close objects are blurry

FLOATERS – very small pieces of the vitreous that break off and float across the eye. Floaters are more likely to develop as we age and are more common in people who are very nearsighted, have diabetes or who have had a cataract operation.

FOVEA – the center of the macula and the point of sharpest vision in the eye

G GLAUCOMA – a group of eye diseases (characterized by high pressure) caused by increased pressure within the eyeball on the optic nerve. If left untreated, glaucoma can distort vision, damage the optic nerve and cause permanent vision loss.

H HYPEROPIA – see “farsightedness”

HORDEOLUM – see definition for “sty”

I IRIS – the colored part of the eye that helps regulate the amount of light that enters the eye

IRITIS – inflammation of the iris which can lead to scarring inside the eye and glaucoma. Symptoms include pain, redness and sensitivity to light

K KERATITIS – inflammation of the cornea

L LASER-ASSISTED IN SITU KERATOMILEUSIS (LASIK) – operation to improve vision by reshaping the cornea with a laser

LENS – located behind the iris, it is the clear part of the eye that focuses light on the retina

M MACULA – the part of the retina of the eye that allows you to see fine detail

MEIBOMIAN GLAND – oil glands that, along with tears, keeps the eye wet

MYOPIA – see nearsightedness

n NEARSIGHTEDNESS – when objects close up are clear but distant objects are blurry

O **OPHTHALMOLOGIST** – medical doctor who treats the eye and can perform surgery

OPTIC NEURITIS – inflammation of the optic nerve

OPTOMETRIST or Doctor of Optometry – treats diseases of the eye and prescribes corrective glasses or contacts. Optometrists cannot perform surgery

OPTICIAN – specially trained person who makes and fits glasses and contacts

P **PERIORBITAL CELLULITIS** – infection of the tissues around the eye

PRESBYOPIA – difficulty seeing, particularly small print or in dim light, due to aging

PTOSIS – also called “droopy eyelids”

PROPTOSIS (also called exophthalmos) – one or more of the eyes bulge forward in their sockets. This can be caused by Graves’ Disease or other conditions.

PUPIL – the center of the eye, the black circle inside the iris (the colored part of the eye)

R **RETINA** – the light-sensitive surface (membrane) at the back of the eye that sends images from the lens to the brain

RETINOPATHY – damage to the blood vessels of the retina. It can be caused by high blood pressure or diabetes. Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) can be found in very low-weight premature babies.

RETINAL ARTERY OCCLUSION – blockage in the blood vessels that go to the retina; typically caused by diseases such as diabetes or hypertension

RUBEOSIS – occurs when some blood vessels in the eye become enlarged because other blood vessels in the eye have been weakened due to disease

S SCLERA – the white of the eye

SCRATCHED CORNEA – eye injury caused by a foreign particle such as a speck of dirt, especially common in contact lens wearers. Scratched corneas usually heal in about 14 days when treated by a doctor.

STY – a small lump on the edge or inside of the eyelid that is similar to a pimple

STRABISMUS – a condition in which the eyes are not aligned, commonly called cross-eyed

SUBCONJUNCTIVAL HEMORRHAGE – a red spot seen in the white part of the eye that occurs when a tiny blood vessel breaks in the eye. Subconjunctival hemorrhages are not normally painful or serious but should be checked by a doctor to ensure there is no other problem.

T TEMPORAL OR GIANT CELL ARTERITIS – inflammation of the blood cells in the eyes and scalp, most common in women over the age of 60

U UVEITIS – inflammation of the uvea, the middle section of the eye that includes the iris and nearby blood vessels

V VITREOUS HUMOR – transparent gel that fills the eyeball

Rx Riddles Solved!

Doctors, pharmacists and others use a medical “shorthand.” What difference does it make if your doctor’s handwriting isn’t legible? It might mean the difference between AP and ap!

āā	- ana, so much of each
a.c.	- ante cibum, before meals
ad effect	- until effective
ad lib	- as much as desired
AP	- ante partum, before childbirth
ap	- ante prandium, before dinner
aq	- aqua, water
bid	- bis in die, twice each day
c̄	- cum, with
dbl	- double
h.s.	- hora somni, at bedtime
i.d.	- idem, the same
IM	- intramuscular
k	- constant
mb	- misce bene, mix well
MDR	- minimum daily requirement
MED	- minimum effective dose
npo	- nil per os, nothing by mouth
ō	- nono, without
O.D.	- oculus dexter, right eye
O.S.	- oculus sinister, left eye
p̄	- post, after
per os	- by mouth
prn	- pro re nata, as needed
qh	- quaque hora, every hour
qid	- quater in die, four times each day
qv	- quantum vis, as much as you wish
Rx	- recipe, prescription
STAT	- statim, immediately
sum	- sumat, let it be taken
T or T°	- temperature
t	- time
tid	- ter in die, three times each day
ut dict	- ut dictum, as directed
vid	- see
w	- weight
w/	- with
X	- unknown factor

Diagnosing Eye Disease Web sites

The Medical Library Association (MLA) finds the following Web sites particularly useful for understanding eye disease. For a current list, visit <http://www.mlanet.org>.

National Eye Institute (U.S. National Institute of Health)

<http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/>

Web site features: clinical studies, statistics, fact sheets, news and events, an interactive eye diagram, and a cataract resource guide

MEDLINEPlus® from the National Library of Medicine

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/eyediseases.html>

Web site features: overviews, latest news, diagnosis/symptoms, treatment, prevention and research.

Women's Eye Health Task Force)

<http://www.womenseyehealth.org/>

Web site features: facts for women, causes of vision loss, eye basics and prevention and care

American Foundation for the Blind

<http://www.afb.org/>

Web site features: living with vision loss, information for seniors and kids, eye conditions, blindness statistics and Spanish translations

The Consumer and Patient Health Information Section

(CAPHIS) of MLA evaluates Web sites based on the following criteria: credibility, sponsorship/authorship, content, audience, currency, disclosure, purpose, links, design, interactivity and disclaimers. See the consumer health library directory at <http://caphis.mlanet.org/consumer/consumerSpecific.html>.



Quality information for improved health
www.mlanet.org

Medical Library Association

65 East Wacker Place, Suite 1400

Chicago, Illinois 60601-7248

312.414.9044; Fax: 312.414.8950

email us at: info@mlahq.org

or visit our Website at: www.mlanet.org

For bulk orders, call 312.414.9044 x14

or email mlafa@mlahq.org