A

A & E  abbreviation for the Accident and Emergency department at the hospital; also called the Emergency Department
addiction  the physical need for a substance (e.g. nicotine or alcohol) or an activity (e.g. gambling)
admission  going into hospital for treatment or tests
aggressive  unnecessarily forceful or violent in actions or words; threatening
allergy  a condition in which the body has a bad reaction to something, which could be a food, medicine, pollen, animal fur, etc.
amulance  a vehicle that takes patients to hospital
angina  a medical condition that affects the heart, causing pain in the chest
annual  every year
antenatal  before birth, during pregnancy
antibiotic  a kind of medicine that kills bacteria (e.g. penicillin)
anti-histamine  a kind of medicine used to treat allergies such as hay fever
anxious  nervous, fearful or worried
appointment  a meeting with a doctor or other health professional, arranged at a particular time
arrears  someone who is behind on payments is in arrears
arthritis  a medical condition that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints
artificial resuscitation  rescue breathing – helping someone who has stopped breathing to start breathing again by blowing into their lungs through the mouth
assertive  having the confidence to say what you think, or to ask for what you want in a non-threatening way; able to state your position calmly and with authority
asthma  a medical condition that causes difficulty in breathing

B

bacteria  very small living things that live in and around us; some bacteria are helpful but others can cause illnesses such as food poisoning
Glossary

BCG  the vaccine to protect against tuberculosis

benefits  money that the Government gives people to help with particular circumstances or situations

Best before date  the date on food that tells you when you should eat it by; after this date it may not taste as good or may start to go bad

body temperature  how hot or cold the body is; we measure it with a thermometer; body temperature is usually around 37 °C (98.6 °F); if is higher or lower than this then you may be unwell

booster  an injection that maintains the effects of an earlier vaccination

bronchitis  a medical condition that affects the breathing and causes coughing

budget  the amount of money you can spend; to balance spending with income

budgeting  making sure that you do not spend more money than you have coming in

C

caffeine  a substance contained in coffee, tea and cola; it is a stimulant – it makes you feel alert and active

calorie  a measure of energy, used to show the energy value of food

cancer  a serious illness in any part of the body where the cells become abnormal and grow into a tumour or spread around the body

carbohydrate  the name for starches and sugars in food that provide with energy; bread, rice, potatoes and pasta are examples of carbohydrates

carbon monoxide  a poisonous gas found in tobacco smoke (and other places)

Cardiology department  the hospital department for heart problems

care  actions to make a health problem get better or ease the symptoms

casualty  an injured person or person requiring medical help

cause  the thing that first gives someone a health problem / concern
Glossary

cervical smear test  a test in which cells are taken from the cervix (neck of the womb) and examined under a microscope to check for anything unusual

cessation  stopping

chemist  a health professional who prepares and dispenses prescription medicines to patients; they can also give lots of useful health advice; more correctly referred to as a pharmacist

chemotherapy  treatment with drugs that can kill cancer cells or make them less active

child benefit  money paid by the Government to families who have children aged under 16 (or 18 if still in full-time education)

chiropractor  a health professional who cares for people’s feet; also called a podiatrist

cholera  a serious illness that can be caught by drinking water or eating food that is infected with cholera bacteria

cholesterol  a fatty substance in food, particularly fats; eating too much cholesterol causes heart disease and other health problems

chronic  illness that lasts for a long time

Citizens Advice Bureau  a free service that provides information and advice about rights and means of living

civil status  whether you are married, single, civil partner, etc.

clinic  a place where people go for medical treatment; also a special session for people with a particular health concern (e.g. diabetes clinic, asthma clinic)

collapsed  fainted or fallen down and unable to get up

community  people living in the same area, such as a village, town or district; or people who have a shared interest or problem, such as foster carers or people with HIV

community car / transport scheme  a local transport system in which volunteers take people by car or minibus from their home to the hospital or GP practice

complementary therapy  a range of treatments and therapies that are not usually part of general medical care and treatment but that help some people (e.g. acupuncture, osteopathy)

complete (a form)  fill in (a form)

concessions  reduced cost or free services such as prescription costs or cinema tickets

condition  an ongoing health concern

confident  sure, positive, not shy
Glossary

confirm  say or write that something is correct; make sure
something is true; make an arrangement (e.g. an appointment)
definite
confirm (instructions)  double-check by repeating information
consent  agree to
constipated  difficulty passing stools (poo) from the bowel
consult  ask or discuss with
consultation  a meeting with a health professional to get advice
or information
contraception /contraceptives  ways to stop a woman from
going pregnant (e.g. condoms, the coil, the contraceptive pill)
contraindication  a condition which means that a certain
medicine is not suitable for a particular patient
convenience foods  foods that are easy to prepare and are often
packaged
coordination  the ability to work different muscles together
COPD  abbreviation for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a
condition that affects the lungs, making it hard to breathe
cosmetic  improving someone’s appearance
council tax benefit  money paid by the Government to help with
council tax
counselling  advice and support for people who have emotional
problems
counsellor  a person who listens to problems and may give advice
or support
course  a number of treatments or doses of medicine; if you are
told to ‘finish the course’, you should continue taking the
medicine until it is all gone
cramp  pain caused by muscles tightening suddenly
craving  longing; need or desire for something
creative  imaginative and artistic

D

debt  money owed
declare  say or write that something is true
defects  faults
defrosted  returned to a temperature above freezing
degrees Celsius (ºC)  the standard temperature scale used in the UK; on this scale, normal body temperature is about 37 ºC; water boils at 100 ºC and freezes at 0 ºC

degrees Fahrenheit (ºF)  old-fashioned temperature scale; on this scale, normal body temperature is about 98.6 ºF

dehydration  not having enough fluid in the body

dental  relating to the teeth

dentist  a health professional who cares for teeth

depression  a medical condition causing low mood and feelings of sadness and hopelessness; it also causes other symptoms such as anxiety and changes in sleeping and eating habits

Dermatology department  the hospital department for skin problems

diabetes  a serious illness in which the body cannot take in and use glucose; it is often treated with insulin injections

diarrhoea  a condition in which the faeces (poo) are liquid and the person needs to go to the toilet often

diet  the food normally eaten on a day-to-day basis

dietitian  a health professional who advises on what to eat and drink

diphtheria  a serious illness caused by bacteria that affects the throat, making it difficult to breathe and swallow

direct  straight and to the point

disclosure  letting somebody else see or read something

disheartened  feeling negative or having lost confidence

disorganised  not organised, chaotic

Display until  a date on an item which is the last day a shop can offer it for sale

disposable  throw-away, only to be used once

dizzy  feeling unbalanced or that your head is spinning

document  a piece of written or printed material that provides information or evidence (e.g. passport, driving licence, birth certificate)

dose / dosage  the amount of medicine that should be taken, and how often

double whisky  two measures of whisky; also applies to two measures of other spirits (e.g. double vodka, double brandy)
Glossary

E

earache  a pain in the ear
ED  the abbreviation for the Emergency Department at a hospital.
Accident and Emergency departments (A&E) are being re-named
ED departments
electrocuted  when electricity has passed through someone’s body
and given them an electric shock
electrocution  getting a severe electric shock or electrical burns
eliminate  get rid of
emergency  an urgent situation –action is needed right now
ENT  the ear, nose and throat clinic or department at the hospital
entitled  allowed to have
entitlement  when you have a right to something
epilepsy  a medical condition that affects the brain, which may
cause fits or unconsciousness; often well-controlled by medication
equivalent to  equal to, the same as
examination  the checks that a doctor does on a patient to find
out what is wrong, for example listening to their heart, feeling
the stomach and so on
exceed  go over, take more than the specified amount
exemption  when you don’t have to pay
expiry date  a date put on items to show when they are past their
best or could go off

F

faecal occult blood test  a test used to check for blood in the
faeces (poo)
faint  feeling weak and ill and about to lose consciousness
fat  butter, oil and margarine are fats; a small amount of the right
fat in your diet is good for you; some fats are better for you than
others
fever  a high body temperature (higher than 37 ºC); fever is often
a symptom of an infection
fibre  a material in food that helps it pass through the body
fire-resistant  difficult to set alight / burn
fit you in  make space or time for you
flexibility  the ability to bend and stretch
fluid  a liquid such as water
food allergy  a sensitivity to certain foods, which may cause illness or in extreme cases, death
food group  a name for foods that are similar, such as proteins fracture clinic  the hospital department for people with broken bones
freefone  a telephone number that people can call without having to pay for the call full-fat milk  milk with full fat content fully booked  no free appointment times

G
GDA  the abbreviation for guideline daily amount, which tells the amount of the food substance to eat every day
GP  the abbreviation for general practitioner (family doctor) GP practice  a place where you can consult a doctor, nurse or other health professional (sometimes called a surgery or health centre) grow out of  lose the problem as you grow older GUM clinic  GUM is the abbreviation for genitourinary medicine; this is the hospital clinic for sexually transmitted diseases including HIV infection

H
Haematology department  the hospital department for blood testing and blood problems hay fever  an allergic reaction to pollen, causing sneezing, runny nose and itchy red eyes headache  a pain in the head health professionals  qualified people who work in the NHS, such as doctors, nurses, health visitors, midwives, etc. health visitor  a nurse who provides health support, health education and advice for families (especially with new babies or children under 5) healthy  fit and well healthy eating  eating a variety of food from the main food groups in the right proportions heart attack  an emergency situation in which the heart suddenly stops working properly
heart disease  a medical condition in which the heart doesn’t work normally
helpline  a telephone line where people can get free advice or support
Hib  abbreviation for Haemophilus influenzae b; a bacterial infection that can cause breathing problems and meningitis; children are vaccinated (immunised) against Hib
high blood pressure  a medical condition in which the force of the blood passing through the body is stronger than normal – this can lead to serious illnesses (also called hypertension)
HIV / AIDS  HIV is a virus that attacks the body’s ability to fight disease; HIV infection eventually leads to AIDS, which is when the body can no longer fight infections, and normally causes death
housing benefit  money paid by the Government towards housing costs
hyperlink  part of a web page that you can click on to get to another web page or website (also called a link or a live link)
hypothermia  having a body temperature that is too low; it can be dangerous

ibuprofen  a painkiller and anti-inflammatory drug that can be bought without a prescription
icon  a symbol or small picture on a computer screen; when you click on an icon, the computer does something
identity card  a card that is used to prove who someone is and what organisation they are from
immunisation  an injection given to protect someone from getting a disease in the future; you can be immunised against many different disease; also called vaccination
incapacity benefit  money paid by the Government to people who are not able to work because of ill health
income support  money paid by the Government to help people who have no income or a low income
income tax  money taken from your wages by the Government
independent  acting and thinking on your own
ingredient  the food items needed to cook a meal
infection  illness caused by viruses, bacteria or fungi
influenza  (often called flu for short) an illness caused by a virus that affects the nose, throat and lungs; someone with flu has a high temperature and will feel very weak

inoculation  another word for vaccination or immunisation

intensive care  the hospital department for people who are seriously or dangerously ill; also called the intensive therapy unit

Internet  a worldwide information network that can be accessed via a computer

intoxication  being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

itching / itchy  an uncomfortable feeling on your skin that makes you want to scratch it

(J,K)

L

laid-back  relaxed and not concerned or worried about things

landlord  the owner of a flat or house, to whom rent is paid

landmark  something that helps you recognise where you are (e.g. a well-known building)

lease  a document explaining the circumstances of renting a place

legal  laid down by the law

lifestyle  the way you live each day; your everyday habits, such as exercise, diet

life-threatening  when someone is in danger of dying

limb  an arm or leg

link  part of a web page that you can click on to get to another web page or website (also called a live link or hyperlink)

loner  someone who likes to be on their own, without others

M

mammogram  a type of photograph (an X-ray) taken by machine to check for breast cancer

maternity  related to pregnancy and childbirth

maternity ward  the hospital department for mothers with new babies

maximum  the highest or greatest amount allowed
medical card  an official card that shows your name, address and NHS number

medical history  details of your past illnesses, injections, operations, etc.

medicine / medication  something that you take to relieve an illness or condition

meningitis  a serious infection (caused by bacteria or virus) that affects the brain; it is a medical emergency

mentor  a personal advisor who provides help and support

midwife  a health professional who looks after women while they are pregnant, during the birth of the baby and in the first few days afterwards

minus  less than; or below zero

MMR  an abbreviation for the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination; all of these infections can be serious, which is why the vaccination is recommended

modification  a change

mole  a dark spot on your skin

monitor  keep a regular check on

monounsaturated fats  fats found in some plant oils (e.g. olive oil and rape seed oil); they are ‘healthy fats’ and if used to replace saturated fats in the diet, they can help to lower blood cholesterol levels

moody  often going into bad moods, changeable

motivation  a reason for wanting to do something

multiply  increase in number very quickly (e.g. bacteria)

mumps  a serious infection of the glands that makes the neck and face swell; children are vaccinated against mumps with the MMR vaccine

N

nausea  a feeling of needing to be sick / vomit

nervous  not confident; frightened or anxious

Neurology department  the hospital department for problems with the brain and nervous system

next of kin  closest relative who will consent (give permission for) to treatment for you if you are unable to do so; this is also the person with whom medical staff will be willing to discuss your treatment and care
Glossary

NHS  the abbreviation for the National Health Service, which is
the organisation that provides all the free health services in the
UK
NHS Direct  a self-help and information service provided free by
the National Health Service (available by phone [0845 46 47] or
on the Internet [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk]
nicotine  a chemical in tobacco that smokers are addicted to
NRT  the abbreviation for nicotine replacement therapy; NRT
helps you to manage without cigarettes so that you can give up
smoking; many different products such as patches and gum are
available
nurse  a health professional who provides care for people who are
sick or injured
nutrition  the ‘goodness’ in the food; it is used for energy and for
your body to grow and repair itself

O

Obstetrics and Gynaecology department  the hospital
department for women who need care while pregnant and during
birth (obstetrics) and for problems with women’s reproductive
systems (gynaecology)
omega-3 oils  these are found in oily fish (e.g. sardines, mackerel);
including omega-3 oils in the diet can help to reduce high
cholesterol levels
optical  related to eyes and eyesight
optician  a health professional who provides eye care as well as
glasses and lenses
ordinary strength beer  beer up to 3.5% vol.
Outpatients department  the hospital department where patients
go for check-ups or simple treatment but do not stay overnight
over-the-counter medicines  medicines that can be bought at a
pharmacy without a prescription

P

Paediatric department  the hospital department for children’s
health problems (sometimes called paediatrics)
palpitations  obvious rapid, irregular or strong beating of the
heart, caused by agitation, exertion or illness
paracetamol  a kind of medicine that relieves pain and fever; it can be bought without a prescription

passive smoking  breathing in (inhaling) other people’s cigarette smoke

patient  a person who is receiving medical advice or treatment

PDA  the abbreviation for personal digital assistant – a hand-held mini computer / organiser

per  for every (e.g. cost per item means cost for each item)

permanent resident  a person who is allowed to live indefinitely in a country (e.g. the UK) even though they are not a citizen of that country

PCV  an abbreviation for pneumococcal vaccine

pertussis  whooping cough – a serious illness that causes coughing, usually in children; children are usually immunised against it

pharmacist  a health professional who prepares and dispenses prescription medicines to patients; pharmacists can give lots of useful health advice; sometimes called a chemist

pharmacy  a shop or hospital department where prescription medicines are prepared for patients; also called the chemist’s when it is a shop on the high street, where it will also sell over-the-counter medicines and other health-related products

phlebotomist  a health professional who takes blood samples

photo ID  an official document showing a photograph of the holder (e.g. a passport)

physiotherapist  a health professional who helps treats disease and injury by physical methods

pneumococcal bacteria  a general term to describe bacteria that cause serious infections such as meningitis and pneumonia

polio  a serious medical condition that can destroy muscles; children are immunised (vaccinated) against polio

polyunsaturated fats  ‘healthy’ fats found in sunflower oil, fish oil and soya oil; if used to replace saturated fats in the diet, they can help to lower cholesterol levels

portal  a website that links to other websites

portion  a quantity of food for one person to eat

positive  helpful, encouraging, motivating

posture  the position a person holds their body in, pose

practical  sensible, suitable for a particular purpose; using your hands to do something
Glossary

**practice nurse**  a nurse who works in a GP practice

**practice team**  the group of doctors, nurses and other health professionals in a GP practice

**pre-heated**  already heated

**premature**  born early

**pre-payment**  paying for something in advance

**prescribe**  when a doctor or sometimes a nurse fills in a prescription form

**prescription**  a form (usually filled in by a doctor) that says which medicine or treatment a person needs; the pharmacist supplies the medicines ‘on prescription’

**prevent**  stop or keep from happening

**prevention**  actions to help someone avoid getting a health problem

**primary care**  the first services you would normally contact with a health problem (e.g. your GP / doctor, dentist, optician or pharmacist)

**professional**  a qualified person

**proof of identity**  evidence that someone is who they say they are (e.g. the person might carry an identity card)

**proof of residency**  an official document that shows you have the right to live in the UK

**proportion**  the size of one thing compared with another

**protein**  a material found in food that your body needs to grow and repair itself

**psoriasis**  a skin disease

**Psychiatry department**  the hospital department for people with mental health difficulties

**pub measure**  25 ml of spirits (e.g. whisky, vodka)

**pulled**  (of a muscle) stretched until painful

**pulse**  the effect of your heart beat, which you can feel at the wrist and other places on your body

**Q**

**quit**  give up, stop

**quarterly**  every three months; four times a year
Glossary

R

rash  an area of red spots on the skin
RDA  the abbreviation for recommended daily allowance; the RDA is the amount of a vitamin or mineral a person should have every day
RDI  abbreviation for recommended daily intake; the RDI is the amount of a vitamin or mineral a person should have every day
reassure  provide comfort and support
reassurance  comfort and support, telling someone that everything is OK
receipt  a piece of paper that shows that you have paid for something
receptionist  the person who greets patients at a GP practice and makes appointments
recovery  getting better, healing
reduced immunity  more likely to get infections because the body cannot fight off bacteria and viruses
refreeze  freeze again something that has thawed
refrigerated  cooled down in a refrigerator for storage
refund  money received if you take something you have bought back to the shop
register  join the list of patients at a GP practice
regular intervals  with the same time gap between each (e.g. every 4 hours) or at the same times over the course of a day (e.g. morning and evening every day)
rehydrate  to replace water that has been lost from the body; this is particularly important after vomiting or diarrhoea, and especially so in young children
relapse  go back to previous habits or condition
reliable  trustworthy and dependable
relief  easing of a symptom, for example pain relief means easing or reducing pain
remedy  something that puts right or makes better a medical problem
rent  the money you pay to live in a flat or room
repeat prescription  the same prescription as last time (patients with long-term conditions can often receive the same medicine or treatment without seeing their doctor every time)
representative  a person doing something on behalf of (for) another person
rescue breathing  helping someone who has stopped breathing to start breathing again (it used to be called artificial resuscitation)
resting heart rate  the speed at which your heart beats when you are not moving
resuscitation  rescue breathing – helping someone who has stopped breathing to start breathing again by blowing into their lungs through the mouth
Rheumatology department  the hospital department for illnesses or problems with muscles, joints, bones, etc.

S
saturated fats  hard fats found in butter, cheese, lard and animal fat; they increase cholesterol levels and you should avoid eating too much of them; replace them in your diet with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats
scale of 1 to 10  a way of describing how much pain you feel: a score of 1 means very little pain; a score of 10 means very bad pain
screening  checking people’s health to find out whether they have a medical condition in the early stages (e.g. breast screening for breast cancer)
scroll  to move up or down on a computer screen using the arrow keys or the arrows on the screen
search engine  a facility on the Internet that looks for websites
seep  leak or ooze out
self-esteem  belief in your own worth or value
selfish  putting yourself first without thinking of others
semi-skimmed milk  milk with some of the cream (fat) taken out
side-effect  an unwanted effect of taking a medicine
skimmed milk  milk with all the cream (fat) taken out
smoking cessation  giving up smoking
snack  food you eat between meals or instead of meals
sodium  salt is made up of sodium and chloride; to work out the equivalent amount of salt, multiply the sodium content by 2.5 (e.g. 1.1 g sodium is equivalent to 2.75 g salt).
spinal  relating to the spine or backbone – the line of bones down the middle of the back
spirit  alcohol that has been distilled and has a high alcohol content
sprained  (of a joint) twisted, painful and injured
stamina  the ability to keep going, often called ‘staying power’
stereile  free of germs
stimulant  something that speeds up responses
stimulation  motivation, something that gets you started
strained  (of a muscle) stretched and twisted
strength  the ability to lift or move weights or forces
stress  pressure, strain or worry
stroke  damage to part of the brain because the blood supply is cut off
suppress  keep down; stop from happening
surgery  a place where you can consult a doctor, nurse or other health professional; this could be your GP surgery; surgery also means having an operation
swollen  when a part of the body is larger than usual
symptom  something that suggests an illness, for example, sneezing is one symptom of a cold

tai chi  a Chinese martial art that involves slow, controlled movements
taster sessions  sessions given at the beginning of a course so that people can find out more about the course and decide whether they want to do it

tax credits  money paid by the Government to help with everyday costs
TB  the abbreviation for tuberculosis, a serious infection that affects the lungs
temperature  how hot or cold something is; normal body temperature is about 37 °C (98.6 °F); if someone ‘has a temperature’, their body is hotter than usual (they have a fever)
tetanus  a serious infection that you can get through a cut or wound; people are usually vaccinated (immunised) against tetanus
thawed  unfrozen, melted
thermometer  the instrument we use to measure temperature
thigh  the upper part of the leg above the knee
throat  the inside of the neck; the front part of the neck
throbbing  a feeling of pain coming and going strongly in waves
transport scheme  a local transport system in which volunteers take you by car or minibus from your home to the hospital or GP practice

trapped (of a nerve) caught tight; pinched and painful

treatment  actions that make a health problem get better

tuberculosis  a serious infection that affects the lungs; often abbreviated to TB

twist  (of an ankle) bend out of its proper position

typhoid  a serious infection you can get from drinking bad (dirty) water

U

unconscious  in a sleep-like state, breathing but not aware of what is happening

under-confident  not confident, not sure of yourself

unsaturated fats  fats, usually oils, that come from vegetables, usually described as monounsaturated or polyunsaturated; unsaturated fats are good for you and, if used to replace saturated fats in the diet, they can help to lower cholesterol levels

updated  made current / relevant; brought up-to-date

urgent  when you need to do something now – you can’t wait

urine  pale yellow liquid that your body makes and stores in the bladder to get rid of waste products; wee

Urology department  the hospital department for problems with the bladder, kidneys, etc.

Use by date  the date on food that tells you the last date you can eat it; it may not be safe to eat after this date

V

vaccination  giving a vaccine (usually by injection) to protect against getting a disease; also called immunisation

vaccine  a substance (usually given by injection) that provides immunity (or protection) against a disease

valid  acceptable, up-to-date

vegetarian  does not eat meat

vicious circle  a pattern of events that is hard to escape

volunteer  offer to do something for free

vomit  be sick, bring up the contents of the stomach
W

web address  the address, usually starting 'www.', that you key into your computer when linked to the Internet to get to a particular website

web page  a page on the world wide web, accessed via the Internet

website  a collection of web pages and other information (such as images, sound and video files, etc.) appearing under one web address and accessed via the Internet

wheezy  breathing with difficulty and making a whistling noise, a symptom of asthma, bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

whooping cough  a serious infection that causes coughing, usually in children (also called pertussis); children are usually vaccinated (immunised) against whooping cough

withdrawal symptoms  the physical effects that you experience when you give up an addictive substance such as alcohol or nicotine (in cigarettes)

world wide web  the collection of information that can be accessed using the Internet

XYZ

X-ray  photograph of the inside the body (and the hospital department where these are taken)

yoga  a type of exercise for medication, posture and self-control