



Physician's Lexicon

The Epi- Words of Medicine

THE STANDARD MEDICAL DICTIONARY CONTAINS almost eight pages of medically-relevant words each beginning with the prefix, *epi-* (or its phonemic equivalents, *ep-* and *eph-*.) It is of Greek origin conveying meanings such as 'upon', 'subsequent to' or 'following.'

A host of anatomic terms, employing *epi-* as a prefix, need no etymologic explanation (epicardium, epicondyle, epidermis, epididymis, epigastrium, epiphysis, etc.) But other terms, using the *epi-* prefix, have wandered somewhat from their Greek origins.

The word, epilepsy, is derived from the Greek, *epi-* and *lambanien*, the latter meaning to seize or take hold of, leading, in time, to the Latin, *epilepsia*, which faithfully translates to the English, seizure. The Greek prefix, *lepto-*, however, means thin or delicate, as in words such as leptomeninges.

An episode—currently meaning an incident or a specified interval of time—originates from the Greek, *episodion*, a noun meaning 'coming in', or 'beside'. It stems earlier from the Greek, *eisodos*, meaning 'an entrance' or 'an arrival'; and still earlier from the Greek, *hodos*, meaning 'a pathway'. A medical episode, hence, conveys a narrower meaning: a happening, often quite brief, of pathological significance (e.g., an episode of fainting).

An epidemic (a Greek noun, *epidemia*) means, literally, 'that which is among', or 'upon the people' and, inferentially, a communicable disease.

The epiglottis, the cartilagenous triangle at the base of the tongue, is a word of Greek origin compounding the prefix, *epi-*, and the root *glossa*, meaning tongue. *Glossa* has also given rise to terms such as glossary thus using the metaphoric

meaning of the word, tongue, to signify a language (as in English, "He speaks in many tongues.") Related words include hypoglossal, pangloss, polyglot, glossectomy and glottis.

The hormone, epinephrine, translates as 'upon the kidney', and the Latin equivalent would be 'adrenal.'

Epistaxis, a bleeding, inferentially, from the nose, comes from the Greek root, *stasis*, meaning 'a standing' or 'a falling'. A similar word, epistasis, in genetics means the dominance of one gene over another (ie, one gene standing over another.)

And amongst the many '*ep-*' words there is EPCOT, a Disney theme park in Orlando, Florida, and a center of great revelation. It represents an acronym for Experimental Prototype of Tomorrow.

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VITAL STATISTICS

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Rhode Island Monthly Vital Statistics Report Provisional Occurrence Data from the Division of Vital Records

Underlying Cause of Death	Reporting Period			
	October 2011	12 Months Ending with October 2011		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	212	2,466	234.1	3,692.0
Malignant Neoplasms	162	2,233	212.0	5,535.0
Cerebrovascular Diseases	29	436	41.4	684.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	58	682	64.8	9,692.5
COPD	27	528	50.1	525.0

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	April 2012	12 Months Ending with April 2012	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,046	13,779	13.1*
Deaths	793	11,202	10.6*
Infant Deaths	(5)	(91)	6.6#
Neonatal Deaths	(4)	(70)	5.1#
Marriages	366	6,927	6.6*
Divorces	238	3,858	3.7*
Induced Terminations	290	4,659	338.1#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	37	735	53.3#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(31)	(622)	55.5#
20+ weeks gestation	(6)	(113)	8.2#

(a) Cause of death statistics were derived from the underlying cause of death reported by physicians on death certificates.

(b) Rates per 100,000 estimated population of 1,052,567. (www.census.gov)

(c) Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL).

Note: Totals represent vital events that occurred in Rhode Island for the reporting periods listed above. Monthly provisional totals should be analyzed with caution because the numbers may be small and subject to seasonal variation.

* Rates per 1,000 estimated population

Rates per 1,000 live births