

Instructional Terminology

Nursing Services 51.3902.00



This **Instructional Terminology** defines entry-level industry terms identified by the program's Technical Standards, Measurement Criteria, and Instructional Framework. This resource is designed for use in classroom and laboratory environments to ensure students are introduced to the essential occupational terminology relevant to their program. It supports the consistent use of terms and definitions in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and corresponds with the Technical Standards endorsed May 27, 2025.

A

Abdominal thrust - Placing the thumb side of the fist above the navel in a quick inward and upward motion to help dislodge food or an object from the trachea

Abduction pillow - An orthopedic wedge pillow to keep the legs separated and the hips in proper alignment after hip surgery to prevent dislocation

Abnormal vital signs - Measurements of the body's basic functions that fall outside the normal expected range, which may indicate illness, injury, or a change in health status

Abuse - A deliberate action that causes harm, pain, or distress to another person

Accident - An unexpected event that causes harm, injury, or property damage

Accountable - Responsible for one's actions and required to explain or justify them

Active range of motion - Independent movement done by a patient using their own muscle strength

Activities of Daily Living (ADL) - Basic self-care tasks that a person performs every day, such as grooming, eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring, and ambulating

Acute - A condition that happens suddenly and usually lasts a short time

Adaptive device - Equipment modified or designed to help a person perform a specific task despite a disability or limitation

Adduction - Moving a body part toward the center of the body

Admission - The process of a patient or resident being accepted into a hospital or healthcare facility for treatment

Advance directives - Written legal documents stating a competent individual's medical care preferences if the individual becomes unable to communicate those preferences

Affected side - The side of the body that has been weakened or cannot be used normally because of injury or illness

Airborne - The spread of infectious disease through very small particles or droplets that remain suspended in the air and can be inhaled by others

Alternating pressure mattress - A special mattress that alternates pressure to prevent pressure injuries

Alternative feeding methods - Methods used to provide nutrition when an individual cannot eat or swallow safely, such as through intravenous nutrition, a nasogastric tube, or a gastrostomy tube

Alzheimer's disease - A progressive brain disease that causes declines in memory, thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform daily activities and is the most common cause of dementia

Ambulation - The ability to walk from one location to another

Amputations - Surgical removal of a limb or part of a limb

Anaphylaxis - A severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that happens quickly and affects the whole body

Angina - Chest pain or discomfort that is caused by reduced blood flow to the heart

Anorexia nervosa - An eating disorder characterized by food restriction, an intense fear of gaining weight, and a distorted perception of body weight or shape

Anti-embolic stockings - Specialized elastic compression stockings used to help prevent blood clots and improve circulation

Apical pulse - The heartbeat heard with a stethoscope at the apex (tip) of the heart, used to determine a person's heart rate and rhythm

Apnea - A pause or stop in breathing

Arizona State Board of Nursing - The regulatory agency in Arizona that oversees nursing practice (LNA, LPN, RN, NP) to protect public health and safety

Arrhythmia - An abnormal heartbeat that may be too slow, too fast, or irregular

Arthritis - Inflammation of one or more joints that causes pain, swelling, stiffness, and reduced movement

Asepsis - The absence of disease-causing microorganisms (germs) and the practices used to prevent infection

Asphyxia - A dangerous condition in which the body does not receive enough oxygen because breathing is blocked or impaired

Aspiration - A condition in which food, liquid, or vomit is accidentally inhaled into the airway or lungs instead of going into the stomach

Assisted living - A type of residential care in which individuals receive assistance with daily activities while maintaining as much independence as possible

Assistive device - Equipment that helps a person perform a task more safely or independently

Asthma - A chronic (long-term) condition that causes inflammation and narrowing of the airways in the lungs, making it difficult to breathe

Atrophy - The shrinking or wasting away of muscles or body tissue due to not being used or from illness

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) - An advanced stage of HIV that weakens the immune system, making it unable to fight infections effectively

Automated External Defibrillator (AED) - A portable device that analyzes the heart rhythm and delivers an electric shock when needed to help restore a normal heartbeat

Axillary temperature - Body temperature measurement taken using a thermometer placed in the armpit (axilla)

B

Bacteria - Microscopic, single-celled organisms found throughout the environment and the body, some of which can cause infection or disease

Basic needs - The essential things people need to survive, stay healthy, and function in daily life

Basic nutrition - The understanding of how the body uses food and nutrients for energy, growth, repair, and overall health

Bath water temperature - The degree of heat in bath water, which should be maintained at a safe temperature according to facility policy and the resident's needs

Bathing - The process of cleaning the body using water, soap, and washing techniques to remove dirt, sweat, and bacteria to keep skin healthy and prevent infection

Bed cradle - A medical device used to keep bed linens off a patient's body, especially over sensitive or injured areas

Bed height - The level of the bed, adjusted for comfort or safety

Bed making - The process of preparing and organizing a patient's bed to be clean, comfortable, and wrinkle-free

Bed position - The way a patient's bed is adjusted to support comfort, safety, and medical needs, such as raised or flat

Bed rest - A healthcare provider's order requiring a patient to remain in bed to promote rest and recovery or prevent complications

Behavior - The way a person acts, reacts, or conducts themselves in response to their environment, feelings, or situations

Beliefs - Ideas or opinions a person accepts as true, often based on culture, religion, experience, or personal values

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) - A noncancerous enlargement of the prostate gland in men that may interfere with urination

Binder - A supportive garment or bandage used to hold or support a part of the body or dressings in place

Biohazard - A biological substance that poses a risk to the health of humans or the environment because it may contain infectious organisms or harmful biological material

Bladder - A hollow, muscular organ that stores urine before it is released from the body

Bladder training - A program used to help a person regain control of urination and improve bladder function by following a scheduled plan for toileting

Bleeding - The loss of blood from blood vessels inside or outside the body

Blindness - The partial or complete loss of vision in one or both eyes that cannot be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, or surgery

Blood pressure - The force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood through the body

Bloodborne pathogen - A harmful microorganism found in human blood or certain body fluids that can cause disease

Bodily fluids - Liquids produced by the body that may contain cells, nutrients, or waste products, such as blood, urine, saliva, or wound drainage

Body alignment - Correct positioning of the body so the head, spine, and limbs are properly balanced and supported

Body mechanics - Proper use of the body to safely move, lift, carry, or position without injury

Body systems - Groups of organs that work together to perform specific functions needed for the body to survive and stay healthy

Bowel movement - The elimination of stool from the body through the rectum

Bowel program - A planned routine used to help a person establish regular and controlled bowel movements

Brachial - Relating to the upper arm between the shoulder and elbow, an area where a pulse can be assessed or blood pressure can be measured

Bradycardia - A condition in which an adult's heart beats fewer than sixty times per minute

Bradypnea - Abnormally slow breathing, typically fewer than twelve breaths per minute in an adult

Breathing - The process of moving air in and out of the lungs to supply the body with oxygen and remove carbon dioxide

Burns - Injuries to the skin or underlying tissues caused by heat, electricity, chemicals, radiation, or friction

C

CAB - Steps for emergency care: Circulation, Airway, Breathing

Call lights - Signaling devices used by residents to alert staff that they need help

Cancer - A disease in which abnormal cells grow uncontrollably and may spread to other parts of the body

Cane - A walking aid that helps a person walk by providing additional balance and stability

Cardiac arrest - A sudden loss of heart function in which the heart stops pumping blood effectively

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) - An emergency life-saving procedure using chest compressions and rescue breaths to maintain blood flow and oxygen to the brain and other vital organs

Cardiovascular system - The body system responsible for transporting blood, oxygen, nutrients, hormones, carbon dioxide, and waste products through the arteries, veins, and capillaries

Care plan - A written document created by the nurse that individualizes a person's health needs, goals, and interventions required to achieve desired outcomes

Carotid - The major blood vessels located on both sides of the neck that supply oxygen-rich blood to the brain, head, and face

Cataracts - Clouding of the normally clear lens of the eye that causes blurred or impaired vision and can be treated surgically

Catheter care - Routine cleaning and monitoring of the catheter and drainage system to ensure proper function and help prevent infection

Catheter - A flexible, thin tube that is inserted into the body to drain fluids, such as urine

Catheterized - Having a catheter inserted into the body

Causing harm - Any action or event that results in injury, damage, illness, impairment, or other adverse effects to a person, property, or environment

Celiac disease - A chronic autoimmune disorder in which the ingestion of gluten leads to damage in the small intestine

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - A government agency responsible for protecting public health by preventing and controlling diseases

Central nervous system - Part of the nervous system consisting of the brain and spinal cord, which controls body actions and thoughts

Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA) - A sudden loss of brain function caused by a blockage or bleeding in or around the brain, also known as a stroke

Chemical disinfection - The process of using chemicals to destroy or kill most disease-causing microorganisms

Chemical spill - The accidental release of a hazardous chemical substance from its container into the environment or healthcare setting

Choking - A medical emergency that occurs when food or foreign objects partially or completely block the airway, making it difficult to breathe

Chronic - A condition that continues over an extended period and often requires long-term care

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) - A progressive, long-term lung disease characterized by persistent airflow limitation that makes it difficult to breathe

Circulation - The continuous movement of blood through the body

Circulatory system - The overall system that includes the cardiovascular system plus the lymphatic system to move all fluids, fight infection, and prevent swelling in the body

Clean - Free from dirt or most germs

Clean catch specimen - A urine sample collected after cleaning the genital area and beginning urination, with the midstream urine collected to reduce contamination from skin bacteria

Cleaning - Removing dirt and germs from surfaces or objects

Cleaning spills - Safe removal of body fluids or chemical substances using appropriate cleaning agents and infection-control procedures to prevent exposure or the spread of infection

Clear liquid diet - A diet that includes only clear liquids such as broth, tea, or gelatin

Cognitively impaired - A condition in which a person has reduced ability to think, learn, remember, reason, or make decisions

Cold application - The use of cold substances (ice packs, cold compresses, cooling devices) to reduce blood flow and decrease inflammation, swelling, and pain

Colon cancer - A malignant (cancerous) tumor that begins in the large intestine

Colostomy - A surgical procedure that creates an opening to bring a portion of the colon through the abdominal wall to create a stoma, allowing stool to leave the body into an external bag

Comfort care - A type of healthcare focused on relieving pain, symptoms, and stress in patients with serious illness, rather than attempting to cure the disease

Communication - The process of exchanging information, thoughts, feelings, and meanings between individuals using verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic methods

Compression - The application of controlled pressure to a body part to reduce swelling, limit fluid accumulation, support an injured area, control bleeding, or improve circulation

Confidential - Intended to be kept private and shared only with authorized individuals

Confidentiality - The ethical and legal duty to protect private information from unauthorized disclosure

Confused resident - A person living in a healthcare facility who shows impaired thinking, memory, or awareness affecting their ability to understand their environment or make appropriate decisions

Congestive heart failure - A chronic condition in which the heart is unable to pump blood effectively, leading to inadequate circulation of oxygen-rich blood to the body and buildup of fluid in the lungs, tissues, and other organs

Consent - Permission provided by a patient to receive medical treatment or undergo a procedure after being informed of the risks, benefits, and alternatives

Constipation - A condition in which a person has infrequent, difficult, or painful bowel movements

Contact isolation - A type of infection control precaution to prevent the spread of infectious organisms that are transmitted through direct physical contact with an infected person or indirect contact with contaminated surfaces or objects

Contamination - The presence of harmful microorganisms, chemicals, or foreign substances on a surface, object, body part, or sterile field making it unsafe or unclean

Continuous Passive Range-of-Motion Machine (CPM) - A therapeutic technique in which a joint is continuously moved through a controlled range of motion by a mechanical device without the patient actively using their muscles; commonly used after a total knee replacement

Contracture - A permanent shortening and tightening of muscles, tendons, or ligaments that results in decreased joint movement and limited range of motion

Contusions - Areas of skin discoloration caused by bleeding under the skin following an injury or trauma

Converting measures - The process of changing a measurement from one unit to another, such as ounces to milliliters to liters

Coping mechanisms - Thoughts, behaviors, and strategies that individuals use to manage stress, difficult emotions, or challenging life situations

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) - A condition in which the coronary arteries that supply blood, oxygen, and nutrients to the heart become

narrowed or blocked, leading to reduced blood flow, resulting in chest pain or a heart attack

Crohn's disease - A chronic inflammatory condition of the gastrointestinal tract

Cross-contamination - The spread of germs from one surface, object, or person to another, which leads to the spread of infection or disease

Crutches - Mobility devices used to support body weight, improve balance, and allow walking when one or both lower limbs are injured, weak, or impaired

Cubic centimeters (cc) and milliliters (mL) in an ounce - Thirty cubic centimeters (cc) or thirty milliliters (mL) equal one fluid ounce

Cultural - Refers to the beliefs, customs, values, behaviors, language, and practices shared by a group of people that influence their decisions, such as healthcare and illness

Cyanotic - Bluish or purplish discoloration of the skin, lips, or nail beds due to decreased oxygen levels in the blood

D

Dangling - The process of gradually moving a patient from a lying position to a sitting position with legs hanging over the side of the bed to assess tolerance before standing or ambulating

Death - The permanent cessation (end) of all vital body functions, including breathing, circulation, and brain activity

Decubitus ulcer - See Pressure injury

Dehydration - A condition in which the body loses more fluids than it takes in, resulting in insufficient water to maintain normal bodily function

Dementia - A chronic and progressive decline in memory, thinking, reasoning, language, and judgment that interferes with daily life

Denture care - Proper cleaning, handling, and maintenance of artificial teeth (dentures) to ensure oral hygiene, comfort, and proper fit while preventing infection and damage

Dentures - Removable artificial teeth used to replace missing natural teeth and restore chewing, speech, and appearance

Depression - A common mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest, or pleasure in activities, and impaired daily functioning

Diabetes mellitus - A chronic disorder characterized by elevated blood glucose (blood sugar) levels due to insufficient insulin production, ineffective use of insulin, or both

Diarrhea - A condition characterized by frequent loose, watery, or unformed stools that usually occur three or more times in one day

Dietary - Related to diet, food intake, and nutrition, especially as it affects health, illness management, and medical treatment

Direct contact - The immediate physical transfer of microorganisms or infectious agents from one person to another

Disaster plan - A structured set of procedures to guide individuals and organizations in responding to emergencies or disasters to protect lives, reduce harm, and ensure continuity of essential services

Discharging resident - The process of releasing a patient or resident from a healthcare facility when they no longer require that level of care or are being transferred to another care setting

Disease - An abnormal condition of the body or mind that impairs normal functioning, or changes how the body works and may be caused by infection, genetic factors, environmental influences, lifestyle, or a combination of these

Disinfection - The process of using chemicals or physical methods to destroy most disease-causing germs

Diverticulitis - An inflammatory condition that occurs when the small pouches in the wall of the colon become inflamed or infected

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) - A legal medical order directing healthcare providers not to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if a patient's breathing stops or if their heart stops beating

Documentation - Written or electronic recording of all patient care information, observations, treatments, and outcomes in a healthcare setting

Dorsiflexion - The movement of bending the foot upward toward the shin

Draw sheet - A half-sized bed sheet placed crosswise over the middle of the bottom sheet, extending from a resident's upper back to their thighs, used to cover the mattress and keep the bottom linens clean

Dressing - Material applied directly to cover a wound to protect it and promote healing, absorb drainage, and prevent infection

Droplets - Tiny particles of respiratory secretions expelled when a person coughs, sneezes, talks, or breathes

Dying - The natural process in which the body gradually loses the ability to maintain vital functions, leading to the end of life (death)

Dysphagia - Difficulty or discomfort in swallowing food, liquids, or medications due to problems in the mouth, throat (pharynx), or esophagus

Dyspnea - Difficult, uncomfortable, or labored breathing

E

Edema - Swelling caused by abnormal fluid buildup in the body's tissues

Elder abuse - An intentional act or failure to act that harms or creates a risk of harm to an older adult

Elevate - To raise a body part above the level of the heart to help reduce swelling

Elimination - The process of removing waste products from the body

Emesis - The forceful expulsion of stomach contents through the mouth, also known as vomiting

Emesis basin - A shallow, kidney-shaped container used to collect vomit or other body fluids or to assist with oral care

Emotional needs - Feelings of being loved, valued, understood, and supported by others

Emotional support - Showing care, understanding, and encouragement to help someone cope with stress, illness, loss, or difficult situations

Emphysema - A chronic lung disease that damages air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs, making it difficult to breathe

Endocrine system - A group of glands that produce and release hormones directly into the bloodstream to regulate many important body functions

Endometriosis - A chronic condition in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, causing pain and sometimes fertility problems

Enteral feeding - A method of providing nutrition, fluids, and medications directly into the stomach or small intestine through a tube when a person cannot eat or swallow safely by mouth, also called tube feeding

Ergonomics - Using proper body positions and tools to prevent injury

Ethics - Moral principles that guide a person's behavior about what is right or wrong

Evacuation - Leaving an area quickly for safety during an emergency

Exposure incident - An event in which a person comes into contact with potentially harmful biological, chemical, or infectious materials, such as blood or other body fluids

Eyeglasses - Lenses worn in frames to correct or improve vision

F

Fall - The sudden unintentional descent of a patient's body to the floor or another lower surface

Fecal impaction - A condition in which a large, hard mass of stool becomes stuck in the rectum or lower colon and cannot be passed normally

Feces - See Stool

Feeding - Providing food and nutrition to a person to maintain health, growth, and energy

Fiber - The part of food that helps move food through the digestive system to help produce a bowel movement

Fire - A chemical reaction that produces heat and light when something burns in oxygen

Fire safety - The procedures and precautions used to prevent fires and protect people, property, and the environment from fire-related harm

First aid - Immediate care given to a person who is injured or becomes ill before professional help arrives

Floating heel - Positioning the legs so the heels remain completely off the bed surface to reduce pressure

Flora - Natural microorganisms that live in or on the body and protect against infection

Fluid intake - The total amount of liquids a person drinks within a specific period of time

Foley catheter - A flexible tube inserted into the bladder and left in place to drain urine continuously into a collection bag

Footboard - A board placed at the foot of a bed to maintain proper foot position and help prevent foot drop

Foot care - Cleaning, inspecting, and caring for the feet to prevent problems

Fowler's position - A bed position in which a patient is placed sitting up in bed with the head raised 45-60 degrees

Fractures - Broken or cracked bones

Fungus - A type of organism, such as yeast or mold, which can live on the body and cause infections, such as athlete's foot or yeast infections

G

Gait belt - A safety device used in healthcare to assist and support a patient when walking, standing, or transferring

Gallbladder - A small, pear-shaped organ that stores bile to help digest fat

Gangrene - A serious condition in which body tissues die due to poor blood supply or severe infection

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) - A chronic condition in which stomach contents frequently flow back into the esophagus, often causing heartburn or irritation

Gastrostomy tube - A feeding tube surgically placed through the abdominal wall directly into the stomach to provide nutrition, fluids, and medications when oral intake is unsafe or inadequate

Germ transmission - The process by which infectious microorganisms (germs) spread from one person, object, or environment to another

Gerontology - The study of aging and the physical, psychological, and social changes associated with older adulthood

Glaucoma - An eye disease that damages the optic nerve, often due to increased pressure inside the eye, and can lead to permanent vision loss if untreated

Gloves - Protective hand coverings to prevent contact with microorganisms or infection

Gravity drain - A drainage system that uses the force of gravity to remove fluids from the body or wound

Grief - The emotional response people experience after a loss, especially the death of a loved one

Grieving process - The series of emotional, mental, physical, and social reactions a person experiences after a significant loss, especially the death of a loved one

Gurney - See Stretcher

H

Hair care - Maintenance and hygiene of the hair and scalp to keep them clean, healthy, and free from infection or damage

Hallucination - A false sensory perception; seeing or hearing things that are not real

Hand sanitizer - A gel or liquid used to reduce or kill germs on hands without water

Hand washing - The process of cleaning hands with soap and water to remove dirt and microorganisms to prevent the spread of infection

Harassment - Unwanted, repeated behavior that offends, threatens, or humiliates a person and causes someone to feel uncomfortable or threatened

Hazardous substance - Any material that can cause harm to people, animals, or the environment due to its chemical, physical, or biological properties

Head of Bed (HOB) - The position or elevation of the upper part of a patient's bed that can be raised or lowered to improve comfort, breathing, and safety

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) - A US law that protects the privacy and security of patient health information

Health care team - A group of trained professionals who work together to provide care, treatment, and support to patients

Hearing aid - A small electronic device worn in or behind the ear to improve hearing for people with hearing loss

Hearing loss - Partial or total loss of hearing, making it difficult to hear sounds or understand speech normally

Heart muscle - The muscle tissue that makes up the walls of the heart, which pumps blood throughout the body

Heat application - Using heat to relax muscles, relieve pain, improve circulation, and promote healing

Heel protector - A device placed around or beneath the heel to protect it from pressure and injury

Height - The measurement of a person's stature from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet when standing upright

Hemorrhage - Heavy or uncontrolled bleeding

Hepatitis B - An infectious disease leading to inflammation of the liver, which may result in acute or chronic liver dysfunction

Hernias - The protrusion (bulging) of an organ or tissue through an abdominal opening or a weak area in the muscle

Home health aide - A trained healthcare worker who provides basic care and assistance to patients in their homes

Home care - The delivery of health services and personal care to a patient in their home, instead of a hospital or health facility

Homeostasis - The body's ability to maintain a stable internal and external balance

Hospice care - End-of-life care that focuses on comfort, dignity, and quality of life for people with a terminal illness when curative treatment is no longer the goal

Hot compress - A warm, moist cloth applied to the body to relieve pain, reduce stiffness and swelling, and improve circulation

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) - A virus that attacks the body's immune system, resulting in increased infections; the advanced stage is AIDS

Hydration - Supplying the body with enough water and fluids to maintain normal body functions and fluid balance

Hygiene - The practice of keeping the body, environment, and surroundings clean to prevent illness and promote health

Hypertension - A condition in which the blood pressure in the arteries is consistently too high; high blood pressure

Hyperventilation - A condition in which a person breathes faster and or more deeply than normal, causing excessive carbon dioxide (CO₂) loss from the body and often resulting from stress or anxiety

I

Ileostomy - A surgically created opening (stoma) in the abdominal wall that brings the end of the small intestine (ileum) to the outside of the body to allow stool to leave the body into a collection bag

Immune - Protected from disease or infection

Impairment - A loss, reduction, or abnormality of a body function that limits normal functioning

Incident report - A written record of an unusual event, accident, injury, or error that occurs in a healthcare setting or workplace

Incontinence (Incontinent) - The involuntary loss of bowel or bladder control (incontinence), which causes a resident to be unable to hold their urine or stool (incontinent)

Indwelling catheter - A flexible tube that is inserted into the bladder and left in place to continuously drain urine

Infection control - Practices and procedures used to prevent the spread of infections and protect patients, healthcare workers, and the public

Infection - The invasion and multiplication of harmful microorganisms in the body

Infectious - Capable of causing or spreading infection

Informed consent - Permission given for a medical treatment or procedure after the patient receives and understands the necessary information about its risks, benefits, and alternatives

Initial observations - The first assessment findings collected when care begins or a patient is first evaluated

Input and output (I&O) - A method of measuring all fluids a person takes in and eliminates from the body over a specific time period, usually 24 hours

Intake - The total amount of fluids and nutrition a person takes into the body over a specific period of time, usually 24 hours

Integumentary system - The body system that includes skin, hair, nails, and associated glands that protect the body, regulate temperature, and provide sensory information

Isolation - The separation of a patient who has a contagious infection (or is suspected of having one) from others to prevent the spread of disease

Isolation precautions - Special infection-control measures used in healthcare to prevent the spread of infection

J

Job description - A written document that explains the duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and expectations of a specific job

K

K-pad - A type of moist heating pad used to apply controlled heat therapy to the body to relieve pain or stiffness

Kidney failure - A condition in which the kidneys lose their ability to properly filter waste, balance fluids, and regulate electrolytes in the body

L

Lice - Small parasitic insects that live on the human body and feed on blood, often causing itching and irritation

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) - A licensed nurse who provides basic care and works under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN) or physician

Life span - The length of time an individual is expected to live, from birth until death

Lift sheet - A draw sheet that has been untucked from the mattress sides and grasped by caregivers to safely roll, turn, or slide a resident up in bed without pulling on the body

Linen - All washable fabrics used in patient care areas, such as bed sheets, pillowcases, gowns, and towels

Lithotomy - A body position used during certain examinations, procedures, and surgeries involving the pelvic area

Living will - A legal document stating a person's wishes regarding medical treatments, in the event they become unable to communicate or make decisions for themselves

Log roll - A safe patient-handling technique used to move a patient while keeping the body in straight alignment, especially the head, neck, and spine, with suspected or known spinal injuries

Long-term - Care or treatment provided over a long period of time, usually extending over months or years

Low-sodium diet - A diet that limits the amount of sodium (salt) a person eats to help control blood pressure and reduce fluid retention

M

Macular degeneration - A progressive disorder of the retina characterized by deterioration of the macula, leading to central vision loss while peripheral vision is usually preserved

Making occupied bed - The process of changing a patient's bed linens while the patient is still lying in the bed

Male perineal care - Cleaning of the male genital and surrounding area (perineum) to prevent infection, odor, and skin irritation

Malpractice - A type of professional negligence in which a healthcare worker fails to provide proper care, resulting in harm or injury to a patient

Mandatory reporting - A legal requirement for professionals to report suspected abuse, neglect, or other harmful situations to the proper authorities

Mask - A protective face covering over the nose and mouth to reduce the spread of microorganisms and protect against infection

Maslow - A psychologist known for creating the Hierarchy of Human Needs

Measuring temperature - The measurement of the body's ability to generate and eliminate heat; measured with a thermometer

Mechanical lift - A powered or manual assistive device designed to lift, transfer, or reposition patients safely while reducing the risk of injury to both the patient and healthcare worker

Mechanical soft diet - A modified diet that includes foods that are easy to chew and swallow and require little chewing; often mashed or chopped

Medical asepsis - Procedures used to reduce and control the number of pathogenic organisms and prevent their transmission from one person or object to another

Memory loss - A condition in which a person has difficulty remembering information, events, people, or skills that were previously learned

Mental health - Refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which affects how they think, feel, and behave

Mentally impaired - Describes a person who has a reduced ability to think, learn, remember, or make decisions due to a cognitive or developmental condition

Microorganisms - Microscopic organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites, which may be beneficial or harmful

Micturition - See Voiding

Mobility - A person's ability to perform purposeful movement, such as turning in bed, sitting, standing, and walking, with or without assistance

Morals - Principles or beliefs about what is right or wrong that guide a person's behavior and decisions

Muscle atrophy - The wasting away or decrease in muscle size and strength due to lack of use, nerve damage, or disease

Musculoskeletal - Relating to the body system composed of muscles, bones, and joints, which work together to provide support, stability, and movement

Myocardial Infarction (MI) - A condition in which blood flow to part of the heart muscle is blocked, causing damage or death of heart tissue due to a lack of oxygen

N

Nail care - Cleaning, trimming, and maintenance of fingernails and toenails to promote hygiene, prevent infection, and keep nails healthy

Nasal cannula - A small, flexible tube used to deliver oxygen through the nose

Nausea - A feeling of discomfort in the stomach accompanied by an urge to vomit

Neglect - Failure to provide necessary care, attention, or support to a person who depends on others, resulting in harm or a risk of harm

Negligence - Failure to provide the level of care that a reasonably careful healthcare professional would provide in similar circumstances, resulting in harm to another person

Neuropathy - A condition involving damage or dysfunction of the nerves, which causes pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness, usually in the hands and feet

Noninvasive - A medical procedure that does not involve breaking the skin, entering the body, or inserting instruments into the body

Nonverbal communication - The transmission of messages or feelings through body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and other nonverbal behaviors

Nosocomial - An infection or disease that is acquired by a patient during a stay in a healthcare facility and was not present at the time of admission

Nothing By Mouth (NPO) - A medical order indicating that a patient is not allowed to eat or drink anything by mouth for a specified period of time (Note: derived from the Latin “nil per os”)

Nurse Practice Act - Laws that define the duties and standards of nursing in each state

Nurse practitioner - An advanced practice registered nurse who can assess patients, diagnose illnesses, order and interpret tests, and prescribe treatments

Nursing assistant's role - Refers to the duties and responsibilities of a nursing assistant in providing basic patient care under the supervision of licensed nurses, such as grooming, bathing, feeding, toileting, and transferring

Nutrition - The process of taking in food and using it by the body for energy, growth, repair, and overall health

O

Objective data - Factual, measurable, and observable information collected during a patient assessment that can be seen, heard, or measured by the healthcare provider

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) - The federal agency that establishes and enforces workplace safety and health standards to protect workers from hazards such as bloodborne pathogens, hazardous chemicals, infectious diseases, and unsafe working conditions

Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) - A federal law that established regulations to improve the quality of care, residents' rights, and standards of practice in long-term facilities

Ombudsman - A person who investigates complaints and protects residents' rights

Optimal - Producing the best or most effective outcome

Oral care - Cleaning and maintenance of the teeth, gums, tongue, and oral cavity to keep the mouth clean, comfortable, and free from infection

Oral hygiene - The practice of keeping the mouth, teeth, gums, and tongue clean to prevent dental disease, infection, bad breath, and other oral health problems

Oral temperature - Body temperature taken by mouth

Orientation - A person's awareness of themselves and their surroundings, including awareness of person, time, place, and situation

Oriented - Aware and able to correctly identify one's person, place, time, and situation

Orthopneic - Describing a person who breathes more comfortably when sitting or standing upright and experiences difficulty breathing when lying flat

Orthotics - Devices worn on the body to support, align, protect, or improve the function of bones, joints, muscles, or limbs

Osteoarthritis - A degenerative, progressive joint disease resulting in loss of articular cartilage and joint inflammation, leading to pain, stiffness, and decreased range of motion

Osteoporosis - A chronic condition characterized by decreased bone density and deterioration of bone tissue, leading to fragile bones that are more prone to fractures

Ostomy - A surgical opening (stoma) from an internal organ to the outside of the body to allow waste to leave the body

Ostomy bag - A medical device (external bag) used to collect waste from a surgically created opening (stoma) in the body

Output - The measurable amount of fluid or waste eliminated from the body over a specific period, commonly including urine, stool, vomit, drainage, and other bodily fluids

Overbed scale - A hospital device used to weigh a patient when they are in bed and not able to stand

Oximeter - A small device that is put on a patient's finger to check how much oxygen is in the blood

Oxygen - A gas in the air that people breathe to help the body make energy and to survive

Oxygen therapy - A medical treatment that provides extra oxygen to a person who is unable to get enough oxygen on their own

P

Pain - A feeling of discomfort that signals something may be wrong in the body

Palliative care - Care focused on comfort and quality of life rather than curing a disease

Parkinson's disease - A progressive neurological disorder that affects movement and muscle control due to a loss of dopamine-producing cells in the brain; symptoms include tremors, rigidity, and a shuffling gait

Particulate respirator (N95) - A special mask that fits tightly on the face and blocks most tiny airborne particles from being breathed in

Passive motion - Movement of a joint done by someone else through its full available range, without the patient using their own muscles

Pathogens - Germs that cause disease

Patient - A person receiving medical care

Perineal - Relating to the area between the genitals and the anus

Perineal care - Cleaning the genital and anal areas to prevent infection

Peripheral vascular disease - A condition in which there is reduced blood flow to the limbs (most commonly the legs) due to narrowing or blockage of blood vessels, usually from atherosclerosis

Peristalsis - The involuntary, rhythmic contractions of the muscles that push food through the digestive system

Personal care - Helping someone with daily hygiene tasks such as grooming, bathing, feeding, toileting, transferring, or dressing

Personal items - Items that belong to a person, such as clothing, toiletries, or other personal belongings

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Specialized clothing or equipment worn by healthcare workers and others to protect from infection, injury, or exposure to harmful substances, such as gloves, gowns, masks, or goggles

Physical abuse - Harming someone's body through hitting, slapping, or pushing

Physical needs - Basic body requirements such as food, water, and rest to survive and stay healthy

Physician - A medical doctor who diagnoses, prescribes medications, and treats illnesses

Physician assistant - A licensed medical professional working under a doctor's supervision who may examine patients, diagnose illnesses, order and interpret tests, and prescribe medications

Physician's authority - The legal right of a doctor to make medical decisions

Pivot - To turn or move the body while keeping one foot in place

Pneumonia - A lung infection that makes it hard to breathe

Poisoning - Illness caused by breathing, swallowing, or touching harmful substances

Policy and procedure book - A written manual used in healthcare that explains how tasks should be done safely and correctly

Positioning - Helping or placing a person's body in a safe and comfortable posture

Postmortem care - Care given to the body after death to prepare it respectfully

Postoperative - The period after surgery during which a patient is recovering, also called post-op

Postoperative pneumonia - A lung infection that happens after surgery

Precaution - Steps taken to prevent harm or illness

Pressure injury - Skin and tissue damage caused by prolonged pressure or pressure combined with shear, also called a decubitus ulcer or pressure ulcer

Pressure ulcer - See Pressure injury

Preventing injury - Taking actions to keep people safe and avoid harm

Privacy - Keeping personal matters and information protected from others

Pronation - The movement of turning the palm or foot downward

Prone - A body position in which a person lies flat on the stomach with their head turned to one side

Prosthesis - An artificial body part used to replace a missing limb or body part, such as a leg or arm

Protocol - A set of rules or steps to follow in a procedure

Psychological abuse - Harming someone's feelings or mind through words or actions

Psychological needs - Emotional needs that help a person feel secure, valued, and cared for

Pulse - The beating of the heart felt in the arteries

Pureed diet - Food blended into a smooth texture for easier swallowing

R

Radial - Referring to the thumb side of the wrist area, where a pulse can be felt

Radiation - Energy in the form of rays used for imaging or treating diseases

Range of motion - How far a joint can move in different directions

Rash - Red, bumpy, itchy, or painful area of irritated skin caused by an allergy or infection

Reality orientation - Helping someone stay aware of time, place, and person

Rectal - Relating to the rectum, the lower part of the large intestine

Registered Nurse (RN) - A trained nurse who provides and manages care, while supervising nursing assistants

Regulations - Official rules set by the government or agencies to ensure safety, order, and proper practice, especially in healthcare or workplace settings

Rehabilitation - Treatment or therapy that helps a person regain strength and independence after an injury or illness

Reminiscing - Thinking or talking about memories from past experiences

Renal failure - The formal medical term for kidney failure, describing a condition in which the kidneys lose their ability to properly filter waste, balance fluids, and regulate electrolytes in the body

Reporting - Communicating important information to supervisors or other staff

Reposition - Moving a person into a new position for comfort or safety

Resident - A person living in a long-term care facility

Resident's belongings - The resident's personal items, clothing, and other items

Resident-centered care - Care focused on each person's needs, choices, and preferences

Resident identification - Confirming a resident's identity before giving care or treatment

Resident independence - Encouraging residents to do as much for themselves as possible

Resident rights - The legal rights of people receiving care, such as dignity and privacy

Resident's bill of rights - A legal document that outlines the rights of individuals living in long-term care facilities, ensuring they receive respectful, safe, and dignified care, and are protected from abuse, neglect, and discrimination

Resident's environment - The surroundings where a resident lives or receives care

Resident's families - The relatives or loved ones of a resident in a care facility

Respectful treatment - Treating others with kindness, dignity, and courtesy

Respiration - The process of breathing in and out

Respiratory symptoms - Problems affecting the lungs or breathing

Respiratory system - The body system consisting of the airways, lungs, and related structures that bring oxygen into the body and remove carbon dioxide

Responding to resident behavior - How caregivers react to a resident's behavior safely and respectfully

Responsibilities - Duties or tasks a person is expected to do

Reverse or negative pressure - An airflow system that prevents contaminated air and infectious particles from spreading from one room to another

Risk factor - Something that increases the chance of disease or injury

Root word - The base part of a word that carries its main meaning

S

Safety - Being free from risk of injury, harm, or danger

Safety and security need - The need to feel safe and protected from harm or danger

Safety Data Sheets (SDS) - Document that describes the properties, hazards, safe handling, storage, and emergency measures related to a chemical substance

Sanitizer - A substance used to reduce or kill germs on surfaces or skin

Scabies - A skin infection caused by tiny mites that cause itching and rash

Scale - A device used to measure a person's weight

Seizure - A sudden episode of abnormal brain activity that can cause shaking or loss of awareness

Semi-Fowler's position - A body position in which a person lies on their back with the head of the bed raised approximately thirty to forty-five degrees

Sensory system - The body system that allows sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell

Sexual abuse - Any sexual action or behavior done to someone without their permission

Sexual harassment - Unwelcome sexual words, actions, or advances that make someone uncomfortable

Sharps container - A special container for safely disposing of needles or other sharp items

Shaving - Removing hair from the skin with a razor

Shingles - A painful skin rash caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox

Shock - A life-threatening condition in which the body's organs do not receive enough blood and oxygen

Shortness of Breath (SOB) - A condition in which a person has difficulty breathing or feels unable to get enough air

Sims' position - A side-lying position in which a person lies on the left side with the left arm behind the body and the right knee and arm bent forward, commonly used for procedures or comfort

Skin - The body's largest organ that protects and covers everything inside

Skin integrity - The health and wholeness of intact skin

Skin observation - Inspection and documentation of the skin's appearance for normal and abnormal findings, such as redness, swelling, warmth to the touch, or other changes

Skin tears - Partial- or full-thickness wounds in which the skin has been torn or separated

Slide board - See Transfer board

Stroke - See Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA)

Social needs - The basic human need for friendship, family, and belonging

Sodium - A mineral found in salt that helps balance body fluids

Specimen - A small sample of tissue, fluid, or other material taken from the body for laboratory examination or medical testing

Spiritual needs - Needs related to a person's beliefs, values, purpose, meaning in life, and connection to something greater than themselves

Sputum - Thick mucus produced in the lower airways and lungs and expelled through the mouth by coughing

Sputum test - A laboratory examination of sputum (mucus coughed up from the lungs and lower airways) to detect infection, disease, or abnormal cells

Standard precautions - A basic set of infection-prevention and control practices used in healthcare to reduce the risk of transmitting microorganisms from known and unknown sources of infection

Sterile - Completely free of germs, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and spores

Sterilization - The process of eliminating or destroying all forms of microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and bacterial spores, from an object, surface, or fluid

Stoma - An artificial opening formed during surgery to allow waste (urine or feces) or air to exit the body when normal routes are not functioning or have been bypassed

Stool - Solid or semisolid waste material passed from the body through the rectum during defecation, also called feces

Stress - Physical or emotional tension caused by challenges or pressure

Stressor - A factor, event, or condition that causes stress or triggers the body's stress response

Stretcher - A wheeled, adjustable, mobile cot used to safely transport sick, injured, or nonambulatory residents in a lying-down position between hospital departments or emergency vehicles, also known as a gurney

Subacute - Relating to a condition that develops more gradually or lasts longer than an acute condition but is not chronic

Subacute care - A level of care provided to patients who require more intensive services than long-term care but less intensive services than acute hospital care

Suffix - A word part added to the end of a root to change its meaning

Sump drain - A medical drainage device used to remove fluid, blood, or air from a body cavity or surgical site using low, continuous suction through a double-lumen tube system

Sundowning - A condition in which a person becomes more confused, agitated, restless, or disoriented in the late afternoon, evening, or night

Supine - A body position in which a person is lying flat on their back with the face and torso facing upward

Supplemental feedings - Additional nutritional support given to increase calorie and nutrient intake when normal intake does not meet dietary needs

Surgical asepsis - A set of practices used to keep an area or object free from all microorganisms (sterile conditions) during procedures that enter sterile body sites

Syncope - A temporary loss of consciousness, commonly called fainting, caused by a brief decrease in blood flow to the brain

System - A group of organs, structures, or components that work together to perform a specific function in the body or in a process

I

Tachycardia - A heart rate greater than 100 beats per minute (bpm) in an adult at rest

Tachypnea - A rapid breathing rate, typically greater than 20 breaths per minute in an adult at rest

Temperature - The degree of heat maintained by the human body as part of normal physiological function and homeostasis

Therapeutic - Intended to treat, manage, or improve a health condition

Therapist - A trained professional who uses therapeutic techniques to assess, treat, and support patients with physical, mental, or emotional conditions

Thermo - A prefix meaning heat or temperature

Thermometers - Tools used to measure body temperature

Thickened liquids - Liquids that have had a thickening agent added to change their consistency, making them easier and safer to swallow for people with swallowing difficulties

Thromboembolic deterrent (TED) hose - Specialized elastic stockings designed to prevent blood clots from forming in the deep veins of the leg

Transfer board - A smooth board used to help move a person from one surface to another, such as from a bed to a wheelchair, also called a slide board

Transfers - The process of moving a person safely from one place to another

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) - A temporary interruption of blood flow to the brain that causes stroke-like symptoms without brain damage, sometimes called a mini-stroke

Transmission - The process by which infectious agents (such as bacteria, viruses, or parasites) are spread from one person, object, or environment to another

Transporting - The process of moving a person, specimen, equipment, or material from one place to another in a safe and controlled manner

Trapeze bar - A metal bar above a hospital or home care bed, often with a triangular handgrip, used by patients to pull themselves up or change position independently or with minimal assistance

Trendelenburg - A body position in which a patient lies flat on their back (supine) with the head lower than the feet, typically at an angle of about 15-30 degrees

Tub bath - A procedure in which a patient is bathed seated or lying in a bathtub of warm water to cleanse the body, promote comfort, and support skin care needs

Tube feeding - See Enteral feeding

Tuberculosis (TB) - A contagious bacterial disease that most commonly affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body

Tubing - A flexible tube used to drain or monitor substances such as fluids, air, blood, or medications

Tympanic - Relating to the tympanic membrane (eardrum) or the middle ear region, where the tympanic temperature is taken

U

Ulcer - An open sore in the skin or mucous membrane that results from tissue breakdown and does not heal easily

Unethical behavior - Actions that violate moral principles, professional rules, or legal standards

Urinary catheter bag - A sterile or clean collection bag that continuously drains urine from the bladder in patients who cannot void normally

Urinary elimination - The process of removing urine from the body

Urinary system - The organ system responsible for filtering blood, producing urine, and excreting metabolic waste while regulating water and electrolyte balance

Urinary tract - The system that includes structures involved in the transport and excretion of urine from the kidneys to the outside of the body

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) - An infection that affects any part of the urinary system, most commonly the bladder and urethra

Urination - See Voiding

Urine - A liquid waste product made by the kidneys and excreted from the body through the urinary system

V

Validation therapy - A way of communicating with people who are confused or have dementia by accepting their feelings and reality

Values - A set of beliefs that influence attitudes, actions, and ethical decision-making in personal and professional practice

Vascular system - The body system responsible for transporting blood, oxygen, nutrients, hormones, carbon dioxide and waste products strictly through the arteries, veins, and capillaries, excluding the heart

Virus - A microscopic infectious agent that can only reproduce inside the living cells of a host organism and can cause diseases

Voiding - The process of emptying urine from the bladder as part of normal waste elimination, also called urination or micturition

Vomiting - See Emesis

W

X

Y

Z