

Medical Reference Guide

Please note that the intent of the medical reference guide is to assist in answering potential medical questions.

Medical Terms and Definitions

- ▶ **AIDS** – acquired immune deficiency syndrome caused by an immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This virus permits opportunistic infections, malignancies, and neurological diseases by slowly compromising the host immune system.
- ▶ **ARC** – AIDS-related complex refers to individuals who have early manifestations of AIDS but have not yet developed signs of immune deficiency. Their symptoms may include recurrent fevers, unexplained weight loss, swollen lymph glands, diarrhea, etc.
- ▶ **Basal Cell Carcinoma** - May occur at any age, but most frequently after age 40. Although they are skin tumors of varying degrees of malignancy, they do not metastasize.
- ▶ **Cancer** – cancer involving internal organs, musculoskeletal, and connective tissue. The Cancer may be invasive and tends to spread directly into surrounding tissues and other organs and may be spread through the lymphatic and circulatory systems.
- ▶ **Cardiovascular Disease** – any disease or disorder of the heart and blood vessels to include heart rate and rhythm disturbances, electrocardiogram (EKG) or other heart test abnormalities, heart enlargement, heart valve disease (Aortic, Mitral, Pulmonic, or Tricuspid), heart valve replacement or surgery, Septal defects, Aortic Aneurysm, Cerebral Aneurysm, Congenital Heart Disorders (such as Tetralogy of Fallot, Transposition of Great Vessels), Pulmonary Embolism, Coronary Artery Disease (such as Angina, heart Attack, Myocardial Infarction), Myocarditis, Cardiomyopathy, Cerebral Vascular Disease (such as CVA, stroke, TIA), Peripheral Vascular Disease (excluding varicose veins), and including Deep Venous Thrombosis.
- ▶ **Cerebral palsy** – a non-progressive group of disorders of the central nervous system resulting in spastic paralysis, weakness of the arms and legs, involuntary disordered movements of the extremities and speech difficulties due to central nervous system damage occurring during or shortly after birth.
- ▶ **Chronic** – A disease or condition of long duration. A disease or condition that shows little change or slow progression.
- ▶ **Chronic Lung Disease**- Any disease of the lungs (other than asthma), e.g. COPD (Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease) and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease).
- ▶ **Cirrhosis of the Liver** – a chronic progressive diffuse disease process with gradual destruction of the functioning liver cells and an increase in fibrous tissue with resulting loss of liver function. Cause is often as a result of alcohol consumption, hepatitis and toxic exposure.

- ▶ **Connective Tissue Disease** – A connective tissue overlap syndrome, which combines the features of Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus, Systemic Sclerosis, and Polymyositis. Usually leads to Systemic Lupus or Systemic Sclerosis over time (50% within 5 years).
- ▶ **Crohn's Disease** –Inflammation and ulceration of the small bowel and colon. Crohn's runs an unpredictable course; although complete remission may occur, the disorder is typically chronic and relapsing. This is a chronic debilitating disorder. When present, the symptoms of pain, diarrhea and malabsorption are likely to compromise the individual's ability to work regardless of the type of occupation.
- ▶ **Cystic fibrosis** – a hereditary disease associated with dysfunction of the exocrine glands affecting both mucus-secreting and eccrine sweat glands. This results in chronic pulmonary disease, pancreatic insufficiency, malnutrition, biliary cirrhosis and intestinal obstruction.
- ▶ **Down's Syndrome** – a congenital condition characterized by varying degrees of physical and mental abnormalities to include mild to moderate mental retardation, poor muscle tone, facial appearance, eye, ear, and heart abnormalities.
- ▶ **Heart Attack**– is a myocardial infarction. A condition caused by an occlusion (closing or blockage) of one of the coronary arteries resulting in permanent damage to a portion of the heart muscle.
- ▶ **Heart Disease** - any pathological condition or disease of the heart.
- ▶ **Heart Surgery**- Any surgery to the heart and or its blood vessels, e.g. Coronary artery by-pass, angioplasty, heart valve replacement, pacemaker, etc.
- ▶ **Hepatitis** – inflammation of the liver. It may be caused by a variety of agents, including viral infections, bacterial invasions and physical or chemical agents.
- ▶ **HIV** – is the virus which causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).
- ▶ **Hodgkin's Disease** – a disease of unknown etiology considered to be a malignant tumor of the lymphatic system which produces enlargement of the lymph nodes, spleen, and liver with invasion of other tissues.
- ▶ **Insulin –dependent diabetes** – A disorder of carbohydrate metabolism, characterized by hyperglycemia (elevated blood sugar) resulting from inadequate production or utilization of insulin. Insulin dependent diabetes frequently has its beginning prior to age 25. Complications include progressive retinopathy (eye damage) and neuropathy (nerve damage), cardiovascular disease, and renal insufficiency.
- ▶ **Kidney disease** – any disease of the kidneys that impairs the kidneys ability to perform its normal functions - to excrete wastes and concentrate urine.
- ▶ **Leukemia** – a chronic or acute disease and is characterized by a neoplastic proliferation of white blood cells.

- ▶ **Manic Depressive Disorder** – a disturbance of mood, either depression or elation or both. It is a major depressive disorder that may range in severity from mild to severe.
- ▶ **Melanoma** – malignant melanoma is the most serious cancer of the skin. It can spread to the lymph nodes and widely throughout the body. Frequently described by use of the Clark Level system I through V and degree of spread referred to as Staging 1 - 3.
- ◆ **Muscular dystrophy** – a congenital disorder of chronic and progressive muscle weakness and atrophy. In most cases this disease has its beginning in childhood. The disease is slowly progressive with increasing weakness and disability.
- ◆ **Psychosis** – a severe emotional illness of organic and / or emotional origin characterized by derangement of personality and loss of contact with reality, often with delusions and hallucinations.
- ◆ **Renal Failure** – Is the loss of kidney function. The failure of the kidney to perform its normal functions - to excrete wastes and concentrate urine.
- ◆ **Schizophrenia** – a disorder that affects cognition and thinking. This condition produces major disruption in perception, thinking, emotion and behavior, and is characterized by delusion, hallucinations and inability to function.
- ◆ **Stroke** – a vascular event, either embolic (blood clot) or hemorrhagic (bleeding), which results in permanent damage to the brain and a disturbance of cerebral function. The symptoms are unilateral neurological symptoms such as paralysis, weakness and loss of coordination affecting the face, arm, leg, balance, gait, speech, swallowing and impaired vision, memory, and sensory sensations (numbness and tingling).
- ◆ **Systemic Lupus Erythematosus** – An inflammatory disease of connective tissue (tissue that supports and connects other tissues and parts). This is caused by a severe disturbance of the immune system. The course is usually chronic with long periods of remission followed by relapse. There is involvement of the joints and tendons, causing arthritis and deformities in some cases and in others there can be damage to the linings of the blood vessels and to the kidneys. The heart, lung, liver and nervous system may also be involved.
- ◆ **Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)** – are due to a brief interruption of the blood supply to the brain and are often referred to as "mini strokes". TIA's develop suddenly and usually last 2 - 30 minutes, but not longer than 24 hours. TIA's are a risk factor for stroke and precede 75% of all strokes.
- ◆ **Ulcerative Colitis** – Inflammatory disease of the lining of the large bowel of unknown cause characterized by attacks and punctuated by periods of remission. Ulcerative Colitis typically runs a chronic intermittent course with varying degrees of symptoms and periods of remission, which can be weeks, months or even years.

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