

Medical abbreviations

Abbreviations are commonly used in health-related documents. New ways to truncate, abbreviate or express terminology and complex terms are continually being developed. Many identical abbreviations may mean something completely different depending on which health professional is using them. An example is MMR, which can mean medication management review;

measles, mumps rubella vaccine; monthly morbidity reports or multimedia resources. Use abbreviations cautiously and avoid abbreviations where the interpretation may be ambiguous. The following table shows some of the more common abbreviations.

Abbreviation	Expanded form
AAA	abdominal aortic aneurysm
ABG	arterial blood gases
ACA	adenocarcinoma; anticardiolipin antibody; anterior cerebral artery
ACE	angiotensin converting enzyme
ACEI	angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor
ACR	albumin–creatinine ratio
ACS	acute coronary syndrome
ACT	activated clotting time
ACTH	adrenocorticotrophic hormone
AD	Alzheimer's disease
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ADP	adenosine diphosphate
ADT	adult diphtheria and tetanus vaccine
AE	air entry; adverse effect; atrial ectopics; above elbow
AF	atrial flutter/fibrillation
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency/immunodeficiency syndrome
AKA	above knee amputation
ALL	acute lymphoblastic leukaemia; acute lymphocytic leukaemia
ALP	alkaline phosphatase
ALT	alanine aminotransferase
AMD	age-related macular degeneration
AMI	acute myocardial infarction
AMSE	abbreviated mental state examination
ANA	antinuclear antibodies
ANCA	antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies
anti-CPP	antibodies to cyclic citrullinated peptides
anti-HCV	hepatitis C antibody
APC	argon plasma coagulation
APTT (aPTT)	activated partial thromboplastin time
ARA	acute respiratory acidosis
ARF	acute renal failure; acute respiratory failure
ARMD	age-related macular degeneration
AS	ankylosing spondylitis; aortic stenosis

Abbreviation	Expanded form
ASA	acetylsalicylic acid
AST	aspartate aminotransferase
AT1	angiotensin type 1 receptor
AT1RA	angiotensin type 1 receptor antagonists
AT2	angiotensin type 2 receptor
AV	aortic valve
AXR	abdominal x-ray
BCC	basal cell carcinoma
BG	blood gases
BGL	blood glucose level
Bili	bilirubin
BKA	below knee amputation
BMD	bone mineral density
BMI	body mass index
BNO	bladder neck obstruction; bowels not open
BNP	B-type natriuretic peptide
BO	bowels open
BP	blood pressure; British Pharmacopoeia
BPD	bipolar disease/disorder
BPH	benign prostatic hypertrophy/hyperplasia
BS	bowel sounds; breath sounds
BSA	body surface area
BSL	blood sugar level
BUN	blood urea nitrogen
Bx	biopsy
CA	carcinoma
CAB	coronary artery bypass
CABG	coronary artery bypass graft
CAD	coronary artery disease
CAL	chronic airflow limitation
C-ANCA	anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody test
CAP	community-acquired pneumonia
CAPD	continual ambulatory peritoneal dialysis
CAT	computerised axial tomography
CBC	complete blood count