

A Glossary of Basic Disease Terminology

D Disease Terminology

These words are used to describe various aspects of disease. Their use is not confined to any one species or body system.

acute characterized by severe, rapid onset with short duration (cf *chronic*)

anorexia lack of appetite for food

asymptomatic without symptoms

benign not malignant

chronic of long duration (cf *acute*)

clinical visible, readily observed externally

enzootic affecting a nearly constant number of animals in a certain area (the equivalent of *endemic* in humans)

epizootic prevalent and spreading rapidly among large numbers of animals at the same time (the equivalent of *epidemic* in humans)

etiology study of the causes of disease; also used as a synonym for *cause*

febrile relating to fever

focus localizing region of disease (plural, *foci*)

idiopathic referring to a disease of spontaneous origin

incidence the number of new cases of a disease occurring during a certain period

lesion a wound or injury

lethal causing death

malignant harmful, threatening life

morbid pertaining to, or affected with, disease

morbidity the ratio of sick animals to well in a population

moribund near death

mortality rate death rate

necrosis death of a portion of the body

necrotic referring to dead tissue

palliative a treatment that gives relief, usually without removing the cause of the disease

pathogen a disease-producing microorganism

prevalence the total number of cases of a disease in a given population at a certain time

prognosis prediction of the course of a disease

prophylaxis treatment to prevent disease

purulent characterized by the presence of pus

sequela a consequence of a disease (plural, *sequelae*)

sign objective evidence of disease

symptom subjective evidence of disease (*sign* and *symptom* are used synonymously in veterinary medicine)

therapeutics the branch of medicine that deals with the treatment of diseases

therapy the treatment of disease

trauma a wound or injury

virulence ability of a microorganism to cause disease

zoonosis a disease that may be transmitted between animals and humans

(excerpt from MCBRIDE Douglas F., 2001:
Learning Veterinary Terminology, Mosby)

- ✓ **Endemic:** A characteristic of a particular population, environment, or region. Examples of endemic diseases include chicken pox that occurs at a predictable rate among young school children in the United States and malaria in some areas of Africa. The disease is present in a community at all times but in relatively low frequency.

By contrast, there are the related terms "**epidemic**" and "**pandemic**":

An **epidemic** is a sudden severe outbreak within a region or a group, as with AIDS in Africa or AIDS in intravenous drug users.

A **pandemic** occurs when an epidemic becomes very widespread and affects a whole region, a continent, or the entire world.

The word "endemic" comes from the Greek "en-", "in" + "demos", "people or population" = "endemos" = "in the population." An endemic is in the people.

By contrast, "epi-" means "upon." An epidemic is visited upon the people. And "pan-" means "all." A pandemic affects all the people.

- ✓ **Epidemic:** The occurrence of more cases of a disease than would be expected in a community or region during a given time period. A sudden severe outbreak of a disease such as SARS. From the Greek "epi-", "upon" + "demos", "people or population" = "epidemos" = "upon the population." See also: Endemic; Pandemic.
- ✓ **Pandemic:** An epidemic (a sudden outbreak) that becomes very widespread and affects a whole region, a continent, or the world due to a susceptible population. By definition, a true pandemic causes a high degree of mortality (death).
- ✓ **Syndemic:** A set of linked health problems involving two or more afflictions, interacting synergistically, and contributing to excess burden of disease in a population. Syndemics occur when health-related problems cluster by person, place, or time. For example, the SAVA syndemic is comprised of substance abuse, violence, and AIDS, three conditions that disproportionately afflict those

living in poverty in US cities. To prevent a syndemic, one must prevent or control not only each affliction but also the forces that tie those afflictions together. From syn-, together + (epi)-demic.

(Source: <https://www.medicinenet.com/medterms-medical-dictionary/article.htm>)