

## GREEK NOUNS

Greek nouns are also divided into three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter.

### Masculine nouns

Most masculine nouns end in **-os** in the nominative singular and form the nominative plural by changing the **-os** to **-oi**. Greek masculine nouns ending in **-os** have usually

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entered English via Latin and so have the Latinized singular form of **-us** and plural form of **-i**.

*bronchus* → *bronchi* [Greek *bronchos* (windpipe) → *bronchoi*]  
*canthus* → *canthi* [Greek *kanthos* (corner of the eye) → *kanthoi*]  
*carpus* → *carpi* [Greek *karpos* (wrist) → *karpoi*]  
*gyrus* → *gyri* [Greek *gyros* (ring, circle) → *gyroi*]  
*isthmus* → *isthmi* [Greek *isthmus* (neck, narrow passage) → *isthmoi*]  
*oesophagus* → *oesophagi* [Greek *oisophagos* (gullet) → *oisophagoi*]  
*pylorus* → *pylori* [Greek *pylōros* (gate-keeper, pylorus) → *pylōroi*]  
*tarsus* → *tarsi* [Greek *tarsos* (flat of the foot, ankle, edge of the eyelid and its lashes) → *tarsoi*]  
*thalamus* → *thalami* [Greek *thalamos* (inner room, bedroom) → *thalamoi*]  
*thrombus* → *thrombi* [Greek *thrombos* (lump, clot) → *thromboi*]  
*thymus* → *thymi* [Greek *thymos* (wart, thymus gland) → *thymoi*]

but note

*nephros* → *nephroi* [Greek *nephros* (kidney) → *nephroi*]

### Feminine nouns

Most feminine nouns end in either **-ē** or **-a** in the nominative singular and form the nominative plural by changing the **-ē** or **-a** ending to **-ai**. In English, Greek feminine nouns ending in **-ē** have usually entered the language via Latin and so have the Latinized singular form of **-a** and plural form of **-ae**. Greek feminine nouns ending in **-a** have also usually entered the language via Latin and so also have the Latinized plural form of **-ae**.

*chorda* → *chordae* [Greek *chordē* (gut, gut string) → *chordai*]  
*theca* → *thecae* [Greek *thēkē* (case, sheath) → *thēkai*]  
*zona* → *zoniae* [Greek *zōnē* (belt, girdle, shingles) → *zōnai*]  
*glossa* → *glossae* [Greek *glōssa* (tongue) → *glōssai*]  
*pleura* → *pleurae* [Greek *pleura* (rib, side) → *pleurai*]  
*trachea* → *tracheae* [Greek *tracheia* (rough (windpipe)) → *tracheiai*]

but note

*raphe* → *raphae* [Greek *rhaphe* (seam, suture, stitching, sewing) → *rhaphei*]

### Neuter nouns

Most neuter nouns end in **-on** in the nominative singular and form the nominative plural by changing the **-on** to **-a**. Most of these have entered English directly, not in a Latinized form:

*amnion* (caul) → *amnia*  
*chorion* (membrane surrounding the embryo) → *choria*  
*ganglion* (encysted tumour on a tendon) → *ganglia*  
*karyon* (nut, kernel) → *karya*

Note, however, that the plural of **neuron** is always **neurons** in English.

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Some of these Greek neuter nouns ending in **-on** in the nominative singular have, however, entered English via Latinized forms:

- ischium* → *ischia* [Greek *ischion* (hip joint) → *ischia*]
- sternum* → *sterna* [Greek *sternon* (chest, breast, breastbone) → *sterna*]
- tympanum* → *tympana* [Greek *tympanon* (kettledrum) → *tympana*]

### Other groups of nouns

As with Latin there are many Greek nouns, of all three genders, that do not fall into the above categories but form various subgroups. Most have come via Latin and consequently have a Latinized spelling in English. The most common of these in medical terminology are:

- thorax* → *thoraces* [Greek *thōrax* (breastplate, trunk, chest) → *thōrakes*]
- calyx* → *calyces* [Greek *kalyx* (husk, cup of a flower) → *kalykes*]
- coccyx* → *coccyges* [Greek *kokkyx* (cuckoo, coccyx) → *kokkyges*]
- phalanx* → *phalanges* [Greek *phalanx* (troop formation, bone of finger or toe) → *phalanges*]
- meninx* → *meninges* [Greek *mēnix* (membrane) → *mēniges*]
- salpinx* → *salpinges* [Greek *salpinx* (trumpet) → *salpinges*]
- larynx* → *larynges* [Greek *larynx* (larynx) → *larynges*]
- pharynx* → *pharynges* [Greek *pharynx* (throat) → *pharynges*]
- oedema* → *oedemata* [Greek *oidēma* (swelling, tumour) → *oidēmata*]
- carcinoma* → *carcinomata* [Greek *karkinōma* (cancer) → *karkinōmata*]
- soma* → *somata* [Greek *sōma* (body) → *sōmata*]
- stroma* → *stromata* [Greek *strōma* (mattress, bed) → *strōmata*]
- zygoma* → *zygomata* [Greek *zygōma* (bolt, bar, zygomatic arch) → *zygōmata*]
- stoma* → *stomata* [Greek *stoma* (mouth) → *stomata*]
- trauma* → *traumata* [Greek *trauma* (wound) → *traumata*]

Greek nouns ending in **-sis** have entered English via Latin and form their plurals as in Latin:

- cyesis* → *cyeses* [Greek *kyēsis* (conception, pregnancy) → *kyēseis*]
- ectasis* → *ectases* [Greek *ektasis* (stretching out, extension) → *ektaseis*]
- paresis* → *pareses* [Greek *paresis* (releasing, relaxing) → *pareseis*]
- sepsis* → *sepses* [Greek *sēpsis* (putrefaction, decay) → *sēpseis*]
- taxis* → *taxes* [Greek *taxis* (arrangement, disposition, order, position) → *taxeis*]