AOHS Health Careers Exploration

Master Vocabulary List

This document provides all the key vocabulary terms presented in this course at a glance. The terms are listed alphabetically; the lesson number identifies the first time a term is introduced in the course. To use the words only from a particular lesson, please see the Key Vocabulary resource included in the Teacher Resources document for that lesson.

| Term | Definition | Lesson # |
| --- | --- | --- |
| acupuncture | A treatment used in Chinese medicine in which the skin is punctured at specific points with thin needles to relieve pain and treat disease. | 2 |
| addiction | A physical and psychological dependence on a substance that temporarily or permanently alters the functioning of the brain. | 11 |
| agent | A part of the chain of infection; the pathogen that causes disease. | 10 |
| AMA | American Medical Association. | 14 |
| anatomy | The study of the structure of a person or animal’s body. | 2 |
| antibiotic | A powerful medicine that fights a bacterial infection. | 2 |
| antipsychotic drug | Medication used to treat severe mental health disorders. | 11 |
| apothecary | A historical name for a pharmacist. | 2 |
| APRN (advanced practice registered nurse) | A nurse with a master’s degree and advanced experience. APRNs include nurse practitioners (NPs), who can specialize in women’s health, geriatrics, psychiatric care, etc.; certified nurse-midwifes (CNMs), who provide gynecological and obstetrical care; clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), who handle a wide range of physical and mental problems; and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs), who administer anesthetics. | 9 |
| asepsis | Being free of infection. Asepsis techniques are used in a hospital to break the chain of infection. | 10 |
| asylum | An antiquated term for an institution that houses and treats people with mental health disorders. | 11 |
| bachelor’s degree | A degree given by a college or university after a person has completed a four-year course of study or its equivalent. | 3 |
| ban | To prohibit or make illegal. | 4 |
| biotechnology research and development | One of five health care career pathways. It involves using living cells to make useful products. | 3 |
| bipolar disorder | A mental health disorder associated with mood swings that range from the lows of depression to the highs of mania. | 12 |
| blood pressure measurement | A measurement of the pressure that the blood exerts on the walls of the arteries. The measurement is one way to gauge the health of the heart. | 7 |
| bone density scan | A diagnostic test that uses X-ray technology to test the strength of bones and diagnose osteoporosis. | 8 |
| BSN (bachelor of science in nursing) | A four-year nursing degree from a college or university; bachelor of science. | 9 |
| catheter | A tube that drains urine from the body. | 10 |
| certification | A fulfillment of education and training requirements established by a professional association or government agency that regulates a particular career. | 3 |
| chain of infection | A process of events that allows infection to spread. | 10 |
| charting | Documenting; recording. | 10 |
| clinical social worker | A mental health professional who delivers clinical services and also specializes in connecting people with resources. | 12 |
| clone | To artificially produce an animal or plant from the cell of another animal or plant. | 2 |
| CNA (certified nursing assistant) | A health care professional who provides basic nursing care. | 9 |
| collaborative provider | A person who works closely with mental health professionals. He or she has usually completed a training program but is not trained to make a diagnosis. | 12 |
| communication specialist | A professional who helps build positive relationships between public health organizations and the public. | 4 |
| confidentiality | The concept that information a patient reveals to a health care provider is private and shouldn’t be shared with other people except under specific circumstances. | 14 |
| co-occurring disorder | A condition when a person has both an addiction and a mental health disorder. | 11 |
| corporate medical director | A professional who is involved with overseeing the well-being of a company’s employees. | 4 |
| CPT | Current Procedural Terminology; codes administered by the AMA that identify medical procedures. | 14 |
| CT scan (computerized tomography scan, or CAT scan) | A diagnostic test that uses many X-rays to create a 3-D cross-sectional image of the inside of the body; performed by a CT technologist with a CT scanner. | 8 |
| dental bridge | A dental restoration used to replace a missing tooth by cementing crowns over the top of the teeth on either side of a missing tooth to create a support structure for a false tooth, known as a *pontic*. | 13 |
| dental caries | Holes in the teeth caused by decay, also called tooth cavities. | 13 |
| dental crown | A type of dental restoration that completely caps or encircles a tooth or dental implant. | 13 |
| deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) | An acid that contains the cells of living things; determines the particular structure and functions of every cell. | 2 |
| depression | A mental health disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest and affects how someone thinks, feels, and behaves. | 12 |
| diagnostic services | One of five health care career pathways. It involves diagnosing disease and injury. | 3 |
| diagnostic test | A test that is important in helping health care professionals diagnose diseases and aid in early detection and prevention; performed by professionals who have special training in operating the machines and conducting the procedures necessary to do the test. | 8 |
| diastolic pressure | The constant pressure in the walls of the arteries when the left ventricle of the heart is at rest. | 7 |
| diet | The type and range of food consumed by a person. This should be distinguished from the phrase "on a diet," which often implies the use of specific intake of nutrition for health or weight-management reasons. | 6 |
| doctorate | A degree (e.g., PhD, PsyD) given by a college or university after completion of a prescribed course of study beyond a bachelor’s or master’s degree. | 3 |
| dopamine | An important neurotransmitter, or messenger, that helps control the brain’s pleasure center. | 11 |
| dressing | A bandage. | 10 |
| DSM | The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*; a guide published by the American Psychiatric Association that explains the signs and symptoms of more than 300 types of mental health conditions. | 11 |
| ECG (electrocardiogram, or EKG) | A diagnostic test used to monitor the heart; performed by an ECG technician. | 8 |
| echoing technique | A communication technique that nurses use to make sure that both the patient and nurse understand each other. The technique involves the nurse and patient repeating back to each other what the other has said. | 9 |
| EEG (electroencephalogram) | A diagnostic test used to diagnose epilepsy and other brain disorders; performed by an EEG technician. | 8 |
| electrodes | Small flat metal discs that have special adhesive to attach to the patient’s arms, legs, and chest (during an ECG) or to the patient’s head (during an EEG). | 8 |
| electronic health record (EHR) | A digital file of a patient’s medical history (e.g., procedures performed). | 14 |
| emotional well-being | An emotional state that is characterized by a person’s ability to manage stress, cope with hard times, feel content, and maintain strong relationships. | 12 |
| empathy | The ability to recognize the feelings of another as if they were your own. | 9 |
| empty calories | Calories from solid fats and added sugars. A calorie is a unit of measurement of the energy value of food. | 6 |
| endodontist | Dentist who specializes in tooth pulp and nerve problems. | 13 |
| entry level | A starting position at a business, one that requires a minimum amount of experience. | 15 |
| environmental health scientist | A professional who helps reduce the threat to public health that is caused by environmental hazards, such as unsafe food and water, waste and sewage disposal, and pollution. | 4 |
| epidemic | A disease that infects a large number of people in a community or region at the same time. | 2 |
| epidemiologist | A professional who investigates and describes what causes diseases in a population, and develops ways to prevent the spread of diseases. | 4 |
| epilepsy | A brain disorder that causes seizures over a period of time. | 5 |
| fad diet | A weight-loss plan that promises dramatic weight loss in a short time. Fad diets don’t usually result in long-term weight loss and can be harmful to the dieter’s health. | 6 |
| fetal ultrasound | A diagnostic test that uses high-frequency sound waves to create an image of a baby in the uterus; performed by a sonographer. | 8 |
| food-borne outbreak | An incident that occurs when two or more people get sick from eating the same contaminated food or drink. | 4 |
| gingivitis | Gum disease. | 13 |
| gum graft | A procedure to add to a patient’s gum line. | 13 |
| gum recession | Exposure of the roots of the teeth, caused by gum disease and/or aging. | 13 |
| Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) | Codes using for billing purposes to describe procedures and services (like ambulance services). They are administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid and are used primarily for Medicare/Medicaid patients. | 14 |
| health educator | A professional who helps people make positive lifestyle changes by educating them about health issues. Health educators develop and write educational material, organize events, and serve as a liaison between community groups and government organizations. | 4 |
| health informatics | One of five health care career pathways. It involves documenting patient records and health information. | 3 |
| HHS | US Department of Health and Human Services; the US government’s principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services. HHS is one of the government agencies most involved in regulating health care in the United States. | 14 |
| HIPAA | The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act of 1996; a law designed to protect patient privacy and to increase an individual’s ability to maintain insurance coverage consistently. HIPAA has a significant impact on how health care organizations do business. | 14 |
| Hippocratic Oath | An oath taken by doctors and health care professionals swearing to practice medicine ethically; named after Hippocrates. | 2 |
| holistic medicine | A system of treatment that takes into consideration the whole patient, including his or her physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual state. | 2 |
| hypertension | A condition of high blood pressure caused by obesity, stress, or high salt intake; can lead to heart disease, stroke, or kidney disease. | 7 |
| hypotension | A condition of low blood pressure that can occur with heart failure, shock, depression, or dehydration. | 7 |
| hypothermia | A condition in which the body temperature is below normal. | 7 |
| hypothesis | A proposed explanation, proved through the scientific method. | 2 |
| immune system | A system of processes that protects the body from disease. | 10 |
| influenza | A highly contagious and often epidemic disease; the flu. Symptoms include a fever and aches and pains. | 2, 4 |
| informatics | Information and knowledge management and the applications of computing technology in support of clinical care and public health. | 14 |
| inhalant | A type of substance that includes glue, paint thinner, and lighter fluid. | 11 |
| International Classification of Disease (ICD) codes | A set of codes administered by the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics, that identify diagnoses and some procedures. ICD codes are used worldwide. In October 2015, ICD-9 is scheduled to be replaced by 1CD-10 in the United States. | 14 |
| licensure | A process in which a government agency authorizes a person to work in a particular occupation. | 3 |
| lobotomy | A procedure that was formerly used to treat people with mental disorders in which part of the patient’s brain was removed. | 11 |
| LPN (licensed practical nurse) | A health care professional who provides nursing care under the supervision of a physician or RN. | 9 |
| mammogram | A diagnostic test used to diagnose breast cancer; performed by a mammographer. | 8 |
| marriage and family therapist | A mental health professional who specializes in helping individuals, couples, and families cope with problems in relationships. | 12 |
| master’s degree | A degree given by a college or university on completion of one or more years of study beyond a bachelor’s degree. | 3 |
| Medicaid | Government-run health insurance that provides health coverage to millions of Americans, including eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults, and people with disabilities. | 14 |
| medical assistant | A professional who is responsible for both medical and administrative tasks in a medical office. | 7 |
| medical biller | A professional who is responsible for overseeing the billing process in a medical office. | 7 |
| medical secretary | A professional who is responsible for communication tasks in a doctor’s office. | 7 |
| Medicare | Medicare is the US federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, certain younger people with disabilities, and people with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD). | 14 |
| microorganism | A small living plant or animal that is not visible to the naked eye. | 2 |
| mode of transmission | A part of the chain of infection; the way that an agent moves from one place to another. | 10 |
| MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) | A diagnostic test that uses magnetic fields and radio waves to create 3-D images of the inside of the body; performed by an MRI technologist. | 8 |
| MyPlate | A public health communication tool to help Americans make healthy food choices. | 6 |
| nicotine | An addictive substance that acts as a stimulant and is found in cigarettes. | 11 |
| nurse practitioner | A professional who is responsible for carrying out specific medical duties that have traditionally been done by physicians. In some states, nurse practitioners are allowed to practice medicine without the supervision of a doctor. | 7 |
| nursing process | A five-step process used by nurses to diagnose and create a care plan for a patient. | 9 |
| nutrition label | A label required on most packaged food and that contains information about the nutrients in the food. | 6 |
| objective observation | An observation that can be measured or seen. | 10 |
| obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN) | A doctor who specializes in treating pregnant women and/or dealing with women’s health issues. | 1 |
| office manager | A professional who is responsible for overseeing the business affairs of a medical office. | 7 |
| operatory | The room in which a dentist works. | 13 |
| oral and maxillofacial surgeon | Dentist who specializes in removing teeth surgically and in repairing deformation/damage to the jaw, mouth, and face. | 13 |
| orthodontist | Dentist who specializes in straightening crooked teeth. | 13 |
| osteoporosis | A disease that causes fragile bones. | 8 |
| pandemic | A worldwide epidemic or an infectious disease that affects people over a wide geographic area. | 2 |
| pasteurization | A process that kills harmful bacteria in food products; named after Louis Pasteur. | 2 |
| pathologist | A physician who specializes in understanding the ways that diseases and illnesses develop. Pathologists examine tissue samples, check the accuracy of lab tests, and interpret the results in order to facilitate the patient’s diagnosis and treatment. | 8 |
| pathway | A category of health care careers. | 3 |
| patient’s authorized representative | A person (typically a family member) who is authorized to act for a patient. | 14 |
| pedodontist | Pediatric dentist. | 13 |
| periodontist | Dentist who specializes in treating gum disease. | 13 |
| periodontitis | Advanced gum disease. | 13 |
| PET scan (positron emission tomography scan) | A diagnostic test that takes images of the inside of the body to see how a patient’s tissues and organs are functioning; performed by a PET technologist. | 8 |
| PHI | Protected health information; information that could potentially be used to identify a patient including name, photograph, contact information, social security number, and so on. | 14 |
| phlebotomist | Health care professional trained to draw blood; usually works in a laboratory setting. | 1, 8 |
| physician | A doctor; a professional who is qualified in medicine to treat people when they are ill. | 7 |
| physician assistant | A professional who is responsible for carrying out specific medical duties, under the supervision of a physician, that have traditionally been done by physicians. | 7 |
| pitch | A concise, persuasive presentation of an idea. | 5 |
| placenta previa | A medical condition that affects some women during pregnancy; the placenta implants itself in an incorrect location, which, in some cases, can interfere with the delivery of the baby. | 1 |
| pneumonia | An infection of the lungs. | 8 |
| policy advisor | A professional who comes up with ideas for solutions to community health problems. These ideas are presented to local, state, and federal government officials, members of the Congress, and even the president. | 4 |
| portal of entry | A part of the chain of infection; the site through which an agent enters a new reservoir or host. | 10 |
| portal of exit | A part of the chain of infection; the site from which an agent leaves the reservoir. | 10 |
| postpartum | The period of time following the birth of a child.. | 1 |
| post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) | A mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event. | 12 |
| preexisting condition | A health condition that already exists when a person applies for health insurance. Many insurance companies have refused to cover preexisting conditions for individual subscribers, but the Affordable Care Act intends to change this. | 14 |
| primary care | Medical care that is given to prevent and treat the main health problems of an individual and a community. | 7 |
| prognosis | A prediction of the probable course or the result of a disease or illness. | 5 |
| prosthodontist | Dentist who specializes in restoring and replacing teeth. | 13 |
| psychiatrist | A physician who specializes in mental health. | 12 |
| psychologist | A mental health professional who uses psychotherapy to treat patients. | 12 |
| psychotherapy | A type of treatment used by psychiatrists and psychologists that helps patients improve their emotional well-being and develop strategies and tools for dealing with daily stress and unhealthy thoughts and behaviors. | 12 |
| public health | An area of science and medicine that works to protect and improve the health of an entire population. | 4 |
| public health nurse | A registered nurse who has received further education for certification in public health. A public health nurse educates people about health issues and works to improve community health and safety by doing things like providing routine vaccinations and teaching senior citizens how to stay safe at home. | 4 |
| pulse measurement | A measurement of the pressure of blood pushing against the wall of an artery as the heart beats and rests. | 7 |
| radiologist | A physician who specializes in interpreting diagnostic tests. | 8 |
| refined grain | A grain that has been milled, a process that removes the parts of the grain that contain the fiber, iron, and vitamins. | 6 |
| registered dietetic technician | A health care professional who is involved with helping people maintain appropriate and healthy diets. The registered dietetic technician’s responsibilities include creating recipes, preparing menus, enforcing sanitation standards, stocking food and supplies, and overseeing the production of meals. | 6 |
| registered dietitian | A health care professional who gives advice on selecting and preparing nutritious food. Dieticians plan food programs and supervise the preparation and serving of meals for both individuals and large groups. They scientifically evaluate clients’ needs based on different criteria, such as health condition or age, and they make suggestions to modify and improve the diet. Dietitians manage food-service systems for large institutions. They also conduct research about nutrition. | 6 |
| reservoir | A part of the chain of infection; the place where a pathogen lives. Reservoirs can be humans, animals, birds, and insects. They can also be inanimate objects such as water, food, table tops, linens, and doorknobs. | 10 |
| respiration measurement | A vital sign that measures the process of taking in oxygen and expelling carbon dioxide through the lungs. | 7 |
| RN (registered nurse) | A health care professional who treats, educates, and provides support to patients; the largest health care occupation. | 9 |
| root canal | A dental procedure to fix a tooth by removing the pulp chamber of the tooth and filling it with a suitable filling material. A root canal is usually performed when the tooth cannot be restored any other way because decay has reached the nerve of the tooth. | 13 |
| SBAR (situation, background, assessment, recommendations) | A communication technique used by health care providers to share patient information while ensuring patient safety. | 9 |
| schizophrenia | A brain disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally. Schizophrenia may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and disordered thinking and behavior. | 12 |
| scurvy | A disease resulting from a vitamin C deficiency. | 2 |
| secondary care | Medical care given to patients who have health problems that require the knowledge and skills of a health care professional who has specialized medical training. | 7 |
| skin biopsy | A diagnostic test in which a skin sample is removed from the patient and tested to diagnose various skin conditions, such as skin cancer. | 8 |
| sodium | Another word for salt. | 6 |
| soft skills | Knowledge and abilities that are not specifically job related but do aid in the ability to perform the job well; these include politeness, professionalism, ability to communicate, writing ability, and so on. | 15 |
| soiled | Dirty; contaminated. | 10 |
| sonographer | A diagnostic technician who performs an ultrasound. | 8 |
| specialist | A physician who has special training, knowledge, and experience in diagnosing and treating a specific condition or part of the body. | 7 |
| sphygmomanometer | An instrument used to measure blood pressure. | 7 |
| subjective observation | An observation that cannot be measured or seen; often it is a statement that a patient makes about the way he or she feels; a symptom. | 10 |
| substance-related disorder | A type of mental disorder that is associated with the misuse of alcohol and legal and illegal drugs. | 12 |
| support services | One of five health care career pathways. It involves working behind the scenes to create safe and clean environments. | 3 |
| susceptible host | A part of the chain of infection; the person who is at risk for infection. | 10 |
| systolic pressure | The pressure that occurs in the walls of the arteries when the left ventricle of the heart is contracting and pushing blood into the arteries. | 7 |
| tertiary care | Medical care that provides medical or surgical services for complex and advanced problems and uncommon conditions. | 7 |
| therapeutic services | One of five health care career pathways. It involves providing care, treatment, education, and counseling. | 3 |
| thermometer | An instrument used to take body temperature. | 7 |
| tourniquet | A tight band used by phlebotomists when drawing blood. | 8 |
| transducer | An instrument used by a sonographer to perform an ultrasound. | 8 |
| ultrasound | A medical imaging technology that uses sound waves to create a picture; frequently used to assess the development of a fetus. | 1 |
| vaccine | A substance that protects a person from getting a disease. | 2 |
| virus | A very small microorganism that may cause disease. | 2 |
| vital signs | Temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure. Vital signs are taken to gather important information about the basic health of a patient’s body. | 7 |
| whole grain | The entire grain kernel, including the bran, germ, and endosperm. | 6 |
| wisdom teeth | Third molars, which generally appear between the ages of 17 and 25. | 13 |
| X-ray | A common diagnostic test that uses radiation to produce images of the inside of the body and diagnose an array of problems that include cavities, arthritis, bone cancer, and pneumonia; performed by a radiologic technologist or technician. | 8 |