



GLOSSARY for Special Needs Disabilities & Medical Terminology Maryland EMSC Program: Children with Special Health Care Needs Project

- abduction** – to move an extremity away from a position near the middle of the body
- achondroplasia** – failure of normal development of cartilage resulting in dwarfism
- adduct** – to move an extremity toward or past the middle of the body
- apnea** – a noticeable pause in the breathing pattern; absence or cessation of breathing for more than 20 seconds
- asthma** – a respiratory disease causing narrowing of the lower airway passages
- atrophy** – decreasing in size or wasting away
- bradycardia** – relatively slow rate of heart contractions
- bronchopulmonary dysplasia** – abnormal development or alterations in the size, shape, and organization of cells within the lungs and their air passages that decreases the function of gas exchange
- cancer** – malignant diseases that can affect any one of the body systems
- cerebral palsy (CP)** – persisting qualitative motor disorder that appears before the age of 3 and is caused by non-progressive damage to the brain
- congenital heart disease** - many different cardiac anomalies that can be cyanotic or acyanotic
- cystic fibrosis** – inherited disease causing abnormal secretion of thick mucous in the bronchi and digestive disorders
- developmental delay** – slower than normal rate of acquisition of developmental skills
- developmental disability** - limited strength or alertness as a result of chronic or acute health problems.
- diabetes** – endocrine disorder in which the body does not produce enough insulin (Type I and Type II)
- dysplasia of the hip (DDH)** – describes hip bone slipping in and out of the hip socket
- extend** - to straighten
- flex** – to bend
- fracture** - a break or rupture
- hemiplegia** – paralysis of half of the body
- hemophilia** – a blood disorder that prevents blood from clotting
- HIV/ AIDS** – acquired immunodeficiency syndrome caused by the human immunodeficiency virus
- hydrocephalus** – excessive build up of cerebral spinal fluid within the cavities of the brain (ventricles)
- low birth weight (LBW)** – less than 2500 grams at birth
- muscular dystrophy (MD)** – a disease characterized by weakness and atrophy of muscle without involvement of the nervous system
- neuromuscular disorder**- disorders of muscle or muscle innervation
- osteogenesis imperfecta (OI)** – genetic disorder of the skeletal system, characterized by brittle bones that are easily fractured. Also referred to as “brittle bone disease”.

paresis – weakness

paralysis (plegia) – complete or partial loss of function

paraparesis – weakness affecting lower extremities

paraplegia – paralysis of both lower extremities and the lower trunk

pierre robin sequence – congenital defect of the face, characterized by abnormal smallness of the jaw & tongue with obstruction of the airway, absence of gag reflex

premature or preterm infant – less than 37 weeks gestational age at birth

prone – lying face down

pulmonary – pertaining to the lungs

quadriplegia – paralysis of all four limbs and most of the trunk, may or may not affect breathing depending upon the level of spinal cord involvement

reflux – regurgitation

rigidity – stiffness or inflexibility

scoliosis – lateral curvature of the spine

seizure disorder – a condition in which an abnormal electrical discharge of the brain cells, often resulting in muscle contractions

sickle cell disease – disorder of red blood cells causing changes in oxygen carrying capacity due to the abnormal hemoglobin S

spasticity – increased muscle tone with exaggeration of the tendon reflexes

spina bifida (myelomeningocele) – developmental abnormality characterized by defective closure of the bony encasement of the spinal cord with different levels of neuromotor disabilities

spinal cord injury (SCI) – injury involving the spinal cord, can be complete or incomplete and can occur anywhere along the spinal column

supine – lying face upward

tone – firmness of tissue or muscle

traumatic brain injury (TBI) – injury sustained to one or more lobes of the brain that can result in temporary or permanent disability affecting thought, emotions, speech, motor function

tracheostomy – a surgical opening into the windpipe/ trachea through the neck to allow passage of air