

Medical Terms and Abbreviations

Medical terms and abbreviations are commonly confused or misunderstood. Below is a list of some common physical therapy terms and abbreviations, as well as anatomical terms.

AC joint – *acromioclavicular joint*; a joint in the front region of the shoulder, which attaches the outer aspect of the collar bone (clavicle) and the tip of the shoulder (acromion)

ACL – *anterior cruciate ligament*; a ligament in the knee that forms a “cross” diagonally from the upper leg bone to the shin bone

AFO – *ankle-foot orthosis*; a brace worn on the ankle, used to keep foot in proper alignment, assists with walking

Anterior – an anatomical term referring to front; versus *posterior* which refers to the back of a body part

Arthroscopy – a surgical procedure that involves the insertion of cylindrical shaped video instrument into a joint to diagnosis or repair tissue

BPPV - *benign paroxysmal positional vertigo*; a disorder that brings on dizziness and vertigo with a change in position, can affect balance

Bursa – a sac like structure filled with fluid, found in many joints of the body, allows structures to rub against each other with less friction; *bursitis* is the inflammation of this structure

CTS – *carpal tunnel syndrome*; compression of the median nerve, a nerve that passes through the wrist to the hand, compression causes tingling and numbness in the thumb and first three fingers

Distal – an anatomical term that refers to the most distant portion of the body part, versus *proximal* which is the closest part

ITB – *iliotibial band*; a tight band of tissue running from the hip to the outer aspect of the knee, tightness of this band can create knee pain

Lateral – an anatomical term referring to a portion of a body part that is farthest from the middle; versus *medial* which refers to the portion of the body closest to the middle

MCL – *medial collateral ligament*; a ligament that is located on the inner aspect of the knee, attaches the thigh bone to the shin bone, is stressed when the lower leg is pulled outward

MRI – *magnetic resonance imaging*; a technique used by radiologists to view internal structures with magnetism and radio waves, displays images of soft tissues (tendon, ligaments, cartilage)

RICE – an acronym used in the treatment of an acute (recent) injury to decrease swelling, rest, ice, compression, elevation

ROM – *range of motion*; the amount of movement a joint has

TENS – *transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation*; a pain relief treatment which uses high frequency electricity to stimulate sensory nerves, interrupting the pain signal and decreasing pain

THR – *total hip replacement*; a surgical procedure that involves removal of the “ball and socket” portion of the hip joint, that is then replaced with artificial objects

TIA – *transient ischemia attack*; an event in which a person temporarily displays the symptoms of a stroke, symptoms last approximately 2 to 30 minutes and are caused by lack of oxygen to the brain

TKR – *total knee replacement*; a surgical procedure in which the far end of the thigh bone and near end of the shin bone are removed and replaced with artificial materials.