

Substitute Word List

Since health writing usually uses technical terms, it is helpful to the reader to use shorter words whenever possible. Here is a list of words that are commonly found in health literature. Using the substitute word instead of the technical word will help lower the readability level of your material. This list was adapted from:

Hilts, L. & Krilyk B. J. (1991). Write readable information to educate. Hamilton, Ontario: Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals and Hamilton Civic Hospitals.

University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics. (1996). Developing Health Facts for You: An author's guide. Madison, WI: Author.

ability - skill

accomplish - carry out

alternative - choice

ambulate - walk

annually - yearly

apply - put on, use

approximately - about

assist - help

attempt - try

available - ready

bacteria - germs

cell culture - tissue study

cerebral hemorrhage - stroke

cessation - stop, pause

chorionic villi - tissue

cognizant - aware

communicate - talk

compassion - pity

competent - able

completion - end, finish

conclusive - final

contact - call

contraceptive - birth control

contusion - bruise

conversion - change

coronary thrombosis - heart attack

correspond - agree

decrease - make less, reduce, lower

deficit - shortage

delete - strike out

demonstrate - show

detect - find

detrimental - harmful

develop - arise, occur

diagnosis - problem, condition

diminish - get less, slow down

discoloration - change in color

disconnect - undo

discontinue - stop

dressing - bandage

due to the fact that - because

dyspepsia - indigestion

elevate - raise

eliminate - get rid of

embolism - lump of blood, clot

encourage - urge

endeavor - try

difficulties - problems, trouble

excessive - too much

experience - feel

facilitate - help, ease

feasible - can be done

frequently - often

fundamental - basic

generate - produce

guarantee - backing, promise

hazardous - risky

humid - damp

humorous - funny

identical - same

illustration - picture

impair - harm

inadvertent - careless

inadvisable - unwise

incision - cut

incorrect - wrong

independent - free

indication - sign

ineffectual - useless

inform - tell

Substitute Word List

inhibit - check, hinder	similarity - likeness
initial - first	similarity - likeness
initiate - begin, start	similar - like
injection - shot	situated - placed
innovation - change	status - state
instrument - tool	stimulate - excite
institute - set up	sufficient - enough
intention - aim	sustenance - support
interrupt - stop	sutures - stitches
laceration - cut, tear	tear of ligament - sprain
lenient - mild	technicality - detail
locality - place	termination - end
manifest - clear, plain	therapy - treatment
minimal - smallest	ultimate - last, final
modification - change	uncommonly - rarely
nebulous - hazy, vague	understand - know
notification - notice	unequivocal - clear
numerate - count	unfounded - groundless
nutrient - food	unnecessary - needless
obligation - duty	until such time - until
observation - remark	utilize - use
observe - note	varicella - chicken pox
obvious - plain	visualize - picture
occurrence - event	voluminous - bulky
opportunity - chance	
option - choice	
palatable - pleasing	
penetrate - pierce	
perforation - hole	
permission - consent	
physician - doctor	
present - give	
principal - main, chief	
project - plan	
qualified - suited	
recognize - know, accept	
recuperate - get well	
rehabilitate - restore	
saturate - soak	
scarlatina - scarlet fever	
segment - part	
sensation - feeling	
several - many	
severity - how bad	
similar to - like	