

# Physician's Lexicon

## Onward and Upward With Prefixes

The often-used Greek prefix, *epi-* conveys a bushel of meanings including the sense of on, beside, above or anterior to; in general, though, it tells the reader that the word carries the sense of being above or directionally superior to. In anatomy, the prefix appears in words such as epicardium, epicene, epicenter, epiglottis, epigastrium, epididymis, epicranium, epithelium, epiphysis, epicanthus, epinephros [in Latin, suprarenal] and epidermis, all self-evident in meaning. Some words need a bit of etymological imagination to understand such as epistaxis [literally to let fall upon in drops], epilepsy [to take hold of, to seize] or epidemic [prevalent in, or upon, the people.] And when the root begins with a vowel, the "i" of *epi-* is then dropped [as in ependyma, ephelic, ephedrine and epaxial.]

Problems, semantic ambiguities, do arise with many of the non-medical terms beginning with *epi-*. For example, ephem-

eral [literally upon a single day] is employed to describe insects, and other non-biological phenomena that are short-lived, such as the mayfly or some Broadway shows. The entomological genus for insects with very brief adult lives is *Ephemera*.

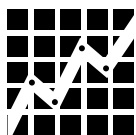
Then there are theological words beginning with *epi-*. Episcopal pertains to a bishop [Greek, *episkopos*, meaning overseer]; epiphany [a divine apparition, and more broadly a divinely inspired thought]; and epistle [originally meaning to set in order; then later pertaining to orders conveyed by a letter or missive.] An epilogue is a sermon or peroration said at the end of the day.

An epicure is a person given up to sensual enjoyment. The word is patterned after Epicurus [an Athenian philosopher, 342 – 270 BCE, who defined a school of philosophy that proclaimed joy, sensual pleasure and lack of pain as the goals of humanity.] His name may be freely translated as "about

youth." An episode was originally meant to designate something that arrived additionally, something extra and *odos*, meaning a path or way.

The meanings of four nouns beginning with *epi-* [epigram, epitaph, epithet, eponym] tend to be confused with each other. An epigram means a brief, witty statement, literally meant to write upon or to supplement something that had already been written. ["What is an Epigram? A dwarfish whole. Its body brevity, and wit its soul" Coleridge.] An epitaph is a funeral oration or is something written or enscribed upon a tombstone. An epithet is something appended to a person's name as a sobriquet adding some attribute to the name [e.g., Alexander the Great, Joe DiMaggio, the Bronx Bomber.]

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## VITAL STATISTICS

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Rhode Island Monthly  
Vital Statistics Report  
Provisional Occurrence  
Data from the  
Division of Vital Records

Underlying Cause of Death	Reporting Period			
	February 2008	12 Months Ending with February 2008		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	116	2,294	214.4	2,857.5
Malignant Neoplasms	100	1,991	186.1	5,310.0
Cerebrovascular Diseases	15	347	32.4	537.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	21	451	42.2	7,501.5
COPD	30	376	35.1	247.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	August 2008	12 Months Ending with August 2008	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,095	12,688	11.9*
Deaths	843	9,993	9.4*
Infant Deaths	(11)	(81)	6.4#
Neonatal Deaths	(9)	(62)	4.9#
Marriages	987	6,285	5.9*
Divorces	234	2,821	2.6*
Induced Terminations	not available	not available	not available
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	40	814	64.2#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(33)	(742)	58.5#
20+ weeks gestation	(7)	(72)	5.7#

(a) Cause of death statistics were derived from the underlying cause of death reported by physicians on death certificates.

(b) Rates per 100,000 estimated population of 1,067,610

(c) Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL)

*Note: Totals represent vital events which occurred in Rhode Island for the reporting periods listed above. Monthly provisional totals should be analyzed with caution because the numbers may be small and subject to seasonal variation.*

\* Rates per 1,000 estimated population

# Rates per 1,000 live births