

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	diminish - get less, slow down
accomplish - carry out	discoloration - change in color
alternative - choice	disconnect - undo
ambulate - walk	discontinue - stop
annually - yearly	dressing - bandage
apply - put on, use	due to the fact that - because
approximately - about	dyspepsia - indigestion
assist - help	elevate - raise
attempt - try	eliminate - get rid of
available - ready	embolism - lump of blood, clot
bacteria - germs	encourage - urge
cell culture - tissue study	endeavor - try
cerebral hemorrhage - stroke	difficulties - problems, trouble
cessation - stop, pause	excessive - too much
chorionic villi - tissue	experience - feel
cognizant - aware	facilitate - help, ease
communicate - talk	feasible - can be done
compassion - pity	frequently - often
competent - able	fundamental - basic
completion - end, finish	generate - produce
conclusive - final	guarantee - backing, promise
contact - call	hazardous - risky
contraceptive - birth control	humid - damp
contusion - bruise	humorous - funny
conversion - change	identical - same
coronary thrombosis - heart attack	illustration - picture
correspond - agree	impair - harm
decrease - make less, reduce, lower	inadvertent - careless
deficit - shortage	inadvisable - unwise
delete - strike out	incision - cut
demonstrate - show	incorrect - wrong
detect - find	independent - free
detrimental - harmful	indication - sign
develop - arise, occur	ineffectual - useless
diagnosis - problem, condition	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	