



HEALTHCARE CAREERS

CTE Unit Resource

Grades 9-12 | 3-Week Unit | 15 Lesson Plans

Medical Terminology • Healthcare Career Exploration • Patient Communication
Medical Ethics • Infection Control • Job-Shadow Reflection Project

Aligned to Health Science CTE Standards

UM Printables

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SECTION 1: UNIT OVERVIEW & STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Unit Overview

This three-week Career and Technical Education (CTE) unit introduces high school students (Grades 9-12) to the diverse and dynamic world of healthcare careers. Through a carefully sequenced blend of direct instruction, interactive activities, role-play simulations, and a job-shadow field experience, students will develop foundational knowledge and skills essential for any health science pathway.

Unit Duration: 3 Weeks (15 50-minute class periods)

Grade Level: 9-12

Prerequisites: None (Introductory Unit)

Essential Questions

- What career opportunities exist within the healthcare industry, and how do they differ in education, scope, and responsibilities?
- Why is medical terminology considered the universal language of healthcare, and how does it facilitate accurate communication?
- How do effective communication skills impact patient outcomes and the quality of healthcare delivery?
- What ethical principles guide healthcare professionals in making difficult decisions?
- Why is infection control a critical competency for every healthcare worker, regardless of role?

Unit Objectives

- Identify and describe at least 15 healthcare careers across therapeutic, diagnostic, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology pathways.
- Decode 50 medical terms by analyzing roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
- Demonstrate patient communication skills including active listening, empathy, open-ended questioning, and therapeutic communication techniques.
- Analyze medical ethics case studies using the four core principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.
- Explain and apply standard infection control practices including hand hygiene, PPE use, and transmission-based precautions.
- Complete a job-shadow experience and produce a structured reflection connecting classroom learning to real-world healthcare practice.

Materials & Resources

- Medical Terminology Flash Cards (50 terms - included in this resource)
- Healthcare Career Matrix (15 roles - included in this resource)
- Patient Communication Scenario Cards (15 scenarios - included in this resource)
- Medical Ethics Case Studies (5 cases - included in this resource)

- Job-Shadow Reflection Guide (included in this resource)
- Unit Assessment and Answer Key (included in this resource)
- Index cards, highlighters, and sticky notes
- Internet access for career research
- Whiteboard and markers
- PPE demonstration supplies: gloves, masks, gowns (Lessons 10-11)
- Guest speaker arrangements (optional, Lesson 5)
- Job-shadow site coordination (Lesson 13)

Health Science CTE Standards Alignment

This unit is aligned with the National Health Science Standards (NHSS) developed by the National Consortium for Health Science Education (NCHSE) and complements state-level Health Science CTE frameworks.

Standard	Description	Lessons
1.1	Identify career pathways in health science (therapeutic, diagnostic, health informatics, support services, biotechnology)	1, 4, 5, 14
1.2	Describe roles and responsibilities of health science professionals across the five pathways	1, 4, 5
2.1	Use medical terminology related to body systems, medical procedures, and diagnoses	2, 3
2.2	Interpret and apply medical abbreviations and terminology in healthcare contexts	2, 3, 15
3.1	Demonstrate effective communication techniques used in healthcare settings	6, 7, 8
3.2	Apply active listening, empathy, and therapeutic communication in patient interactions	6, 7, 8
4.1	Identify ethical principles and their application in healthcare decision-making	9, 15
4.2	Analyze ethical dilemmas encountered in healthcare practice	9
5.1	Describe infection control practices and their importance in healthcare	10, 11
5.2	Demonstrate standard precautions including hand hygiene and PPE use	10, 11
6.1	Explore health science careers through observation and reflective practice	12, 13, 14
10.1	Demonstrate understanding of the healthcare delivery system and team roles	1, 4, 5

SECTION 2: LESSON PLANS - WEEK 1

Foundations of Healthcare

LESSON 1: Introduction to Healthcare Careers & CTE Pathways

Duration: 50 minutes

Standards: NHSS 1.1, 1.2, 10.1

Objectives

- Identify the five health science career pathways (therapeutic, diagnostic, health informatics, support services, biotechnology).
- Describe the scope and diversity of healthcare careers available in today's workforce.
- Explain how CTE programs prepare students for entry into health science professions.

Materials

- Whiteboard and markers • Healthcare Career Matrix handout • Sticky notes (2 per student) • Projector/internet access

Warm-Up / Bell-Ringer (5 min)

Display the prompt: *"When you hear 'healthcare career,' what is the first job that comes to mind? Write it on a sticky note."* Students post sticky notes on the board. Briefly discuss patterns - most students typically name doctor or nurse. Use this to introduce the idea that healthcare offers hundreds of career options beyond these two familiar roles.

Direct Instruction (15 min)

Present the five Health Science Career Pathways as defined by NCHSE:

- **Therapeutic Services:** Professionals who directly treat and care for patients (e.g., physician, nurse, physical therapist, pharmacist).
- **Diagnostic Services:** Professionals who use tests and procedures to identify diseases and conditions (e.g., radiologic technologist, medical laboratory scientist, sonographer).
- **Health Informatics:** Professionals who manage health information and data (e.g., health information technician, medical coder, bioinformatics specialist).
- **Support Services:** Professionals who create a safe and therapeutic healthcare environment (e.g., biomedical engineer, central sterile technician, food services director).
- **Biotechnology Research and Development:** Professionals who develop treatments and technologies (e.g., biomedical researcher, genetic counselor, pharmaceutical scientist).

Guided Practice (10 min)

Distribute the Healthcare Career Matrix. In pairs, students review the matrix and identify at least two careers from each pathway that they find interesting. Pairs share one selection with the class. Teacher facilitates discussion about the diversity of roles and entry-level education requirements.

Independent Practice (15 min)

Students complete a "Career Pathway Scavenger Hunt" worksheet: using the Healthcare Career Matrix, they answer questions such as: Which career requires the most education? Which career has the highest projected growth? Name three careers that involve direct patient contact. Name two careers that do not involve direct patient contact. Students also write a brief response: *"Which pathway interests you most and why?"*

Closure and Assessment (5 min)

Exit Ticket: Name the five health science career pathways and give one example career for each. Collect as students leave.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide a word bank of pathway names for the exit ticket.
- **Extension:** Have advanced students research an emerging healthcare career (e.g., telehealth coordinator, genomic counselor) and write a one-paragraph summary.

Homework

Interview a family member or friend: *"What healthcare professional has made a difference in your life? What did they do?"* Write a 3-5 sentence summary of the response.

LESSON 2: Medical Terminology - Roots, Prefixes & Suffixes

Duration: 50 minutes

Standards: NHSS 2.1, 2.2

Objectives

- Explain the structure of medical terms: root, prefix, suffix, and combining vowel.
- Define and apply 20 common prefixes and suffixes used in medical terminology.
- Decode unfamiliar medical terms by analyzing their component parts.

Materials

- Medical Terminology Flash Cards (Set 1: Terms 1-25)
- Index cards
- Whiteboard and markers
- Highlighters

Warm-Up / Bell-Ringer (5 min)

Write on the board: *"CARDIOLOGIST."* Ask students to break the word into as many parts as they can. Most will recognize "cardio" as relating to the heart. Explain that **cardi/o** = heart, **-logist** = one who studies. This illustrates how medical terms are built from component parts, much like puzzle pieces.

Direct Instruction (20 min)

Teach the four building blocks of medical terminology:

- **Root:** The core meaning of the term (e.g., *dermat* = skin, *gastr* = stomach, *neur* = nerve).
- **Prefix:** Appears at the beginning; modifies the root (e.g., *hyper-* = excessive, *brady-* = slow, *inter-* = between).
- **Suffix:** Appears at the end; often indicates procedure, condition, or specialty (e.g., *-itis* = inflammation, *-ectomy* = removal, *-ology* = study of).
- **Combining Vowel:** Usually 'o'; connects root to suffix or root to root (e.g., *gastr/o/logy*).

Key Rule: A combining vowel is used between a root and a suffix that begins with a consonant, but NOT before a suffix that begins with a vowel. Example: *gastr/o/centesis* (stomach puncture) vs. *gastr/itis* (stomach inflammation) - no combining vowel before -itis because -itis starts with a vowel.

Guided Practice (10 min)

Work through 5 examples together on the board, having students identify root, prefix, suffix, and combining vowel:

- 1) **Dermatitis** = dermat (skin) + itis (inflammation)
- 2) **Endocarditis** = endo (within) + cardi (heart) + itis (inflammation)
- 3) **Gastroenterology** = gastr/o (stomach) + enter (intestine) + ology (study of)
- 4) **Hepatomegaly** = hepat/o (liver) + megaly (enlargement)
- 5) **Bradycardia** = brady (slow) + cardi (heart) + ia (condition)

Independent Practice (10 min)

Students work with Medical Terminology Flash Cards (Terms 1-25). In pairs, one student shows the term side while the other attempts to break it into components and define it. Students create their own "build-a-word" examples: combine a prefix + root + suffix to create 3 new terms and define them.

Closure and Assessment (5 min)

Exit Ticket: Break down the term **NEPHROLOGY** into its component parts and define it. (Answer: nephro/o = kidney, -logy = study of; study of the kidneys)

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide a reference sheet with the 10 most common prefixes and 10 most common suffixes.
- **Extension:** Challenge students to decode a real medical report excerpt (provide a simplified example).

Homework

Review Flash Cards 1-25. Write each term, break it into components, and write the definition. Due at the start of Lesson 3.

LESSON 3: Medical Terminology - Body Systems & Abbreviations

Duration: 50 minutes

Standards: NHSS 2.1, 2.2

Objectives

- Associate medical terminology roots with their corresponding body systems.
- Interpret 25 common medical abbreviations used in clinical documentation.
- Apply medical terminology knowledge to read and interpret simplified clinical scenarios.

Materials

- Medical Terminology Flash Cards (Set 2: Terms 26-50)
- Body systems reference chart
- Abbreviation matching worksheet
- Whiteboard and markers

Warm-Up / Bell-Ringer (5 min)

Quick review: Display 5 terms from Lesson 2 on the board. Students write the breakdown and definition on a slip of paper. Collect for a quick formative check. Review answers together.

Direct Instruction (15 min)

Present the major body systems and their associated terminology roots:

Body System	Root(s)	Example Term	Meaning
Cardiovascular	cardi/o, angi/o	Cardiomyopathy	Heart muscle disease
Respiratory	pulm/o, pneum/o	Pneumonitis	Lung inflammation
Musculoskeletal	oste/o, my/o	Osteomyelitis	Bone/marrow inflammation
Nervous	neur/o, encephal/o	Encephalitis	Brain inflammation
Digestive	gastr/o, hepat/o	Gastroenteritis	Stomach/intestine inflammation
Integumentary	dermat/o, cut/o	Dermatologist	Skin specialist
Urinary	nephro/o, cyst/o	Nephrolithiasis	Kidney stones
Reproductive	gynec/o, hyster/o	Hysterectomy	Uterus removal
Endocrine	endocrin/o, thyro/o	Endocrinology	Study of hormones/glands

Then introduce 25 common medical abbreviations: BP (blood pressure), HR (heart rate), CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), Rx (prescription), Dx (diagnosis), Tx (treatment), NPO (nothing by mouth), PRN (as needed), QID (four times a day), BID (twice a day), TID (three times a day), STAT (immediately), SOB (shortness of breath), CBC (complete blood count), UA (urinalysis), OB (obstetrics), ICU (intensive care unit), ER (emergency room), OR (operating room), AMA (against medical advice), HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), OTC (over the counter), ADL (activities of daily living), VS (vital signs), DNR (do not resuscitate). Explain that abbreviations save time but must be used carefully to avoid miscommunication.

Guided Practice (10 min)

Abbreviation Relay: Divide class into teams. Display a clinical sentence with blanks where abbreviations belong. Teams race to fill in the correct abbreviation. Example: "The patient's **BP** was elevated, so the doctor ordered **STAT** blood work including a **CBC**." Debrief as a class.

Independent Practice (15 min)

Students complete an abbreviation matching worksheet and then work with Flash Cards 26-50. They also read a simplified clinical scenario and underline all medical terms and abbreviations, writing definitions for each in the margin.

Closure and Assessment (5 min)

Exit Ticket: What body system does the root **arthr/o** refer to? Write a medical term using this root and define it. (Answer: musculoskeletal/joints; e.g., arthritis = joint inflammation)

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide an abbreviation reference sheet for the worksheet.
- **Extension:** Students write their own clinical scenario using at least 8 medical abbreviations.

Homework

Review all 50 Medical Terminology Flash Cards. Create a color-coded study guide: highlight prefixes in one color, roots in another, and suffixes in a third. Be prepared for a terminology quiz.

LESSON 4: The Healthcare Career Matrix - Exploring 15 Roles

Duration: 50 minutes

Standards: NHSS 1.1, 1.2

Objectives

- Compare and contrast 15 healthcare careers using the Healthcare Career Matrix.
- Analyze differences in education requirements, salary ranges, scope of practice, and work environments.
- Evaluate personal interest in healthcare careers based on self-assessment of skills and preferences.

Materials

- Healthcare Career Matrix (full handout) • Career Comparison Worksheet • Internet access for supplemental research • Colored pencils/markers

Warm-Up / Bell-Ringer (5 min)

Prompt: *"If you could shadow any healthcare professional for a day, who would you choose and why?"* Students write a 2-3 sentence response. Share with a partner.

Direct Instruction (10 min)

Walk students through the Healthcare Career Matrix, explaining each column: Career Title, Pathway, Education Required, Average Salary, Work Environment, and Key Responsibilities. Model how to read and compare two careers (e.g., Registered Nurse vs. Medical Assistant) using the matrix.

Guided Practice (10 min)

In small groups, students select 3 careers from the matrix that share the same pathway. They create a quick comparison chart on chart paper identifying similarities and differences. Groups present their findings to the class in 1-minute summaries.

Independent Practice (20 min)

Students complete a Career Comparison Worksheet: they select 3 careers of personal interest (from different pathways) and complete a detailed comparison including education pathway, daily tasks, patient interaction level, salary, growth outlook, and personal fit analysis. They also complete a "Career Interest Self-Assessment" identifying their own strengths (e.g., working with people, attention to detail, science aptitude) and match them to suitable careers.

Closure and Assessment (5 min)

Exit Ticket: Name two healthcare careers that require different levels of education and briefly explain how their responsibilities differ because of that education level.

Differentiation

SECTION 5: MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

FLASH CARDS

Instructions for Use

This set includes 50 medical terminology flash cards covering the major body systems, prefixes, suffixes, and roots essential for health science students. Print these pages on cardstock and cut along the grid lines. Each card features the term, its component breakdown, and its definition.

Study Suggestions:

- Color-code your cards by body system (e.g., blue for cardiovascular, green for respiratory).
- Practice breaking down unfamiliar terms by identifying the root, prefix, and suffix.
- Quiz yourself or a partner: read the term aloud and try to define it before flipping the card over.
- Sort cards into 'Know It' and 'Need Practice' piles to focus your study time.

1. Carditis	2. Myocarditis
cardi (heart) + -itis (inflammation)	my/o (muscle) + cardi (heart) + -itis (inflammation)
Inflammation of the heart	Inflammation of the heart muscle
3. Endocarditis	4. Cardiomegaly
endo- (within) + cardi (heart) + -itis (inflammation)	cardi/o (heart) + -megaly (enlargement)
Inflammation of the inner lining of the heart	Enlargement of the heart
5. Angiography	6. Arteriosclerosis
angi/o (vessel) + -graphy (process of recording)	arteri/o (artery) + -sclerosis (hardening)
Process of recording blood vessels	Hardening of the arteries

7. Thrombosis
thromb (clot) + -osis (condition)
Condition of having a blood clot

8. Hemorrhage
hem/o (blood) + -rrhage (bursting forth)
Bursting forth of blood (heavy bleeding)

9. Anemia
an- (without) + -emia (blood condition)
Condition of lacking red blood cells

10. Leukemia
leuk/o (white) + -emia (blood condition)
Cancer of white blood cells

11. Rhinorrhea
rhin/o (nose) + -rrhea (flow/discharge)
Discharge from the nose (runny nose)

12. Pharyngitis
pharyng (pharynx) + -itis (inflammation)
Inflammation of the pharynx (sore throat)

13. Laryngoscopy
laryng/o (larynx) + -scopy (visual exam)
Visual examination of the larynx

14. Pneumonectomy
pneumon (lung) + -ectomy (removal)
Surgical removal of a lung

15. Dyspnea
dys- (difficult) + -pnea (breathing)
Difficult or labored breathing

16. Tachypnea
tachy- (rapid) + -pnea (breathing)
Rapid breathing

17. Bronchitis
bronch (bronchus) + -itis (inflammation)
Inflammation of the bronchial tubes

18. Osteoporosis
oste/o (bone) + -porosis (porous condition)
Condition of porous, brittle bones

SECTION 7: PATIENT COMMUNICATION SCENARIO CARDS

Instructions for Use

These 15 scenario cards are designed for role-play practice (Lesson 8). Print on cardstock and cut apart. Each card provides a realistic patient interaction for students to practice verbal and nonverbal communication skills, active listening, and adaptability. In pairs or triads, one student plays the healthcare provider and the other plays the patient using the scenario details provided.

1. Anxious Pre-Op Patient

Patient: 45-year-old patient scheduled for gallbladder surgery tomorrow.

Situation: The patient is visibly trembling and says, 'I'm terrified I won't wake up from the anesthesia. My friend had a bad reaction once.'

Communication Focus: Active listening, empathy, providing reassurance without minimizing fears, explaining the teach-back method.

2. Hard-of-Hearing Elderly Patient

Patient: 82-year-old patient with significant hearing loss in both ears.

Situation: You are explaining a new medication schedule, but the patient keeps saying 'What?' and mishearing dosages.

Communication Focus: Speaking clearly, facing the patient, lowering pitch, using visual aids/written instructions, patience.

3. Frustrated Waiting Room Patient

Patient: 30-year-old patient waiting 90 minutes past their appointment time.

Situation: The patient approaches the front desk and says loudly, 'I have been waiting for an hour and a half! This is ridiculous. I have a job to get to!'

Communication Focus: De-escalation, acknowledgment, professional tone, offering a concrete update or solution.

4. Pediatric Patient (Vaccination)

Patient: 6-year-old child who needs routine vaccinations.

Situation: The child is crying, hiding behind their parent, and refusing to come near you. They say, 'You're going to give me a shot!'

Communication Focus: Age-appropriate language, getting on their eye level, using distraction techniques, involving the parent.

5. Patient with Limited English Proficiency

Patient: 50-year-old patient who speaks primarily Spanish with limited English.

Situation: You need to explain wound care instructions after a laceration repair. The patient looks confused and nods but cannot repeat the steps back.

Communication Focus: Using simple words, avoiding medical jargon, arranging for a professional interpreter, using visual/demonstrative instructions.

6. Non-Compliant Patient

Patient: 60-year-old patient with diabetes who refuses to take their medication.

Situation: The patient states, 'Those pills make me feel sick, and I don't think I really need them. My sugar is fine when I eat right.'

Communication Focus: Exploring reasons for non-compliance without judgment, affirming their efforts, explaining risks clearly, collaborating on a plan.

7. Grieving Family Member

Patient: Spouse of a patient who just passed away.

Situation: The spouse is sitting in the family room, crying, and asking, 'Why didn't we catch this sooner? Is there anything else that could have been done?'

Communication Focus: Therapeutic communication, silence, active listening, empathy, avoiding defensive justifications.

8. Patient in Acute Pain

Patient: 35-year-old patient in the ER with a suspected kidney stone.

Situation: The patient is pacing, holding their side, and demanding, 'I need something for pain RIGHT NOW! You don't understand how much this hurts!'

Communication Focus: Urgency in acknowledgment, validating pain, clear explanation of next steps/timelines, maintaining calm professionalism.

9. Embarrassed Teenager

Patient: 16-year-old patient who needs to discuss a sensitive skin condition.

Situation: The teenager avoids eye contact, speaks very softly, and says, 'I have this rash... but it's in a private area. I don't want my mom to know.'

Communication Focus: Building trust, ensuring confidentiality limits are explained, using open-ended questions, normalizing the situation.

10. Informed Consent Teach-Back

Patient: 55-year-old patient about to start a new chemotherapy regimen.

Situation: You have just explained the potential side effects of chemotherapy. You need to ensure the patient understands before signing the consent form.

Communication Focus: Using the teach-back method ('Can you explain to me in your own words...'), checking for understanding, avoiding closed-ended 'Do you understand?' questions.

11. Confused Patient (Dementia)

Patient: 78-year-old patient with early-stage dementia in a long-term care facility.

Situation: The patient is trying to leave the facility insisting they need to 'go home to cook dinner for their husband,' even though their husband passed away years ago.

Communication Focus: Validation therapy (acknowledging feelings rather than correcting reality), gentle redirection, calm tone, nonverbal warmth.

12. Complaining Patient

Patient: 40-year-old patient upset about the hospital food.

Situation: The patient says, 'I wouldn't feed this to my dog. How am I supposed to get better eating this garbage? The nurse yesterday was rude, too.'

Communication Focus: Active listening, not taking complaints personally, acknowledging concerns, promising to follow up.

- A. Beneficence and Non-maleficence
- B. Autonomy and Beneficence
- C. Justice and Autonomy
- D. Non-maleficence and Justice

21. What is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infection in healthcare?

- A. Wearing an N95 mask
- B. Taking antibiotics
- C. Hand hygiene
- D. Sterilizing equipment

22. Standard precautions dictate that you should treat which of the following as potentially infectious?

- A. Only blood
- B. Only visible bodily fluids
- C. All blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat), and non-intact skin
- D. Only fluids from patients with known infections

23. Which type of transmission-based precaution requires the use of an N95 respirator and a negative-pressure room?

- A. Contact
- B. Droplet
- C. Airborne
- D. Standard

24. In the 'Chain of Infection,' what is the 'reservoir'?

- A. The way the pathogen enters the new host
- B. The person at risk of getting sick
- C. Where the pathogen lives and multiplies
- D. How the pathogen travels from one person to another

25. What is the correct order for donning (putting on) PPE?

- A. Gloves, Gown, Mask, Goggles
- B. Gown, Mask, Goggles, Gloves
- C. Mask, Gown, Gloves, Goggles
- D. Goggles, Mask, Gown, Gloves

Part 2: Short Answer (Variable Points = 50 points total)

1. Medical Terminology (10 pts): Break down the term **Endocarditis** into its component parts (prefix, root, suffix). Define each part and provide the full definition of the term.

2. Healthcare Careers (10 pts): Compare a career in Therapeutic Services with a career in Diagnostic Services. Give one example of a career for each pathway and explain the primary difference in their daily responsibilities.

3. Patient Communication (10 pts): Convert the following closed-ended question into an open-ended question: *'Are you feeling any pain today?'* Explain why the open-ended version is more effective in a healthcare setting.

4. Medical Ethics (10 pts): Briefly define the ethical principle of **non-maleficence**. Give one specific example of how a healthcare professional applies this principle in their daily practice.

5. Infection Control (10 pts): Explain the difference between **Standard Precautions** and **Transmission-Based Precautions**. Why are transmission-based precautions used in addition to standard precautions?

Thank You!

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