



# Glossary

**Aboriginal:** A person of Aboriginal descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.

**accommodation (of eye):** How the eye automatically adjusts so it can focus at various distances, mainly by changing the shape of its lens.

**acute:** Having a short and relatively severe course.

**acute hospitals:** Public, Department of Veterans' Affairs (repatriation) and private hospitals which provide services predominantly to admitted patients with acute or temporary ailments; the average length of stay is relatively short.

**admission:** Admission to hospital. In this report, the number of separations (q.v.) has been taken as the number of admissions. Hence an admission rate is the same as a separation rate.

**admitted patient:** A patient who undergoes a hospital's formal admission process. See Box 7.1, page 198.

**affective disorders:** A mood disturbance. Includes mania, hypomania, bipolar affective disorder, depression and dysthymia.

**age-specific death rate:** See Box 2.1, page 8.

**age-specific rate:** A rate for a specific age group. The numerator and denominator relate to the same age group.

**age-standardised death rate:** See Box 2.1, page 8.

**age-standardised rate:** Weighted average of age-specific rates according to a standard distribution of age to eliminate the effect of different age distributions and thus facilitate valid comparison of groups with differing age compositions.

**agoraphobia:** Fear of being in public places from which it may be difficult to escape.

**Alzheimer's disease:** A disease (named after a German physician) in which there is progressive loss of brainpower shown by worsening short-term memory, confusion and disorientation.

**angina:** Temporary chest pain or discomfort caused by a reduced blood supply to the heart muscle.

**anxiety disorders:** Feelings of tension, distress or nervousness. Includes agoraphobia, social phobia, panic disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.

**atherosclerosis:** A process that gradually clogs arteries, with fatty deposits building up on the inner walls of the arteries.

**available beds:** Beds immediately available for use by admitted patients as required.

**average length of stay (ALOS):** The average of the length of stay for admitted patient episodes.

**bipolar affective disorder:** Characterised by repeated episodes in which the person's mood and activity levels are significantly disturbed by occasions of both depression and mania.

**blood cholesterol:** Fatty substance produced by the liver and carried by the blood to supply the rest of the body.

**campylobacteriosis:** a disease usually marked by diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting for a few days, caused by some types of *Campylobacter* bacteria and often food-borne.

**capital expenditure:** Expenditure on large-scale fixed assets (for example, new buildings and equipment with a useful life extending over a number of years).

**casemix:** The number and type of acute admitted patients treated in a hospital.

**cause of death:** From information reported on the medical certificate of cause of death, each death is classified by the underlying cause of death according to rules and conventions of the ninth revision of the International Classification of Diseases (q.v.). The underlying cause is defined as the disease which initiated the train of events leading directly to death. Deaths from injury or poisoning are classified according to the circumstances of the violence which produced the fatal injury, rather than to the nature of the injury.

**cerebrovascular disease:** See *stroke*.

**chemotherapy:** A procedure using drugs (chemicals) to prevent or treat disease, the term being most often applied to treatment for cancer rather than for other conditions.

**chronic:** Persisting over a long period.

**chronic bronchitis:** Long-term lung condition with inflammation of the main air passages causing frequent coughing attacks and coughing up of mucus.

**chronic obstructive pulmonary disease:** A combination of emphysema and chronic bronchitis-related conditions, where damage to the lungs tends to obstruct their oxygen intake.

**colonoscopy:** A procedure whereby the inside of the large bowel (colon) is viewed using a long flexible tube inserted through the anus.

**colorectal cancer:** Cancer of the colon (the lower 1.5 to 2 metres of the intestine) or of the rectum (the final 15 cm at the end of the colon, ending with the anus).

**co-morbidity:** The occurrence of two or more diseases or health problems at the same time.

**confidence interval:** A range determined by variability in data, within which there is a specified (usually 95%) chance that the true value of a calculated parameter (e.g. relative risk) lies.

**congenital:** A condition that is recognised at birth, or that is believed to have been present since birth, including conditions which are inherited or caused by an environmental factor.

**coronary heart disease:** Diseases such as heart attack and angina, caused by blockages in the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle.

**crude death rate:** See Box 2.1, page 8.

**cryptosporidiosis:** a disease usually marked by diarrhoea with cramping abdominal pain and other symptoms, caused by *Cryptosporidiosis parvum*, a protozoan parasite and transmitted directly from person to person, or food-borne.

**dentate:** Have one or more natural teeth.

**dementia:** Loss or impairment of intellectual faculties, reasoning power and memory due to a disease of the brain.

**depression:** A state of gloom, despondency or sadness lasting at least 2 weeks.

**diagnosis related groups (DRGs):** DRGs are a means of classifying hospital patients to provide a common basis for comparing factors such as cost-effectiveness and quality of care across hospitals. Each DRG represents a class of patients with similar clinical conditions requiring similar hospital services. See Box 7.2, page 202.

**diphtheria:** A bacterial infection that usually starts with sore throat and tonsils but which can also affect other parts of the body and become severe enough to block breathing. Preventable by vaccine.

**direct bill:** The process by which a medical practitioner or optometrist sends the bill for services direct to Medicare, often referred to as bulk billing.

**disability:** The presence of one or more of fifteen restrictions, limitations or impairments (see Box 2.3, page 22).

**disability-adjusted life year (DALY):** Years of healthy life lost through premature death or living with disability due to illness or injury.

**dysthymia:** A disorder characterised by constant or constantly recurring chronic depression of mood, lasting at least 2 years.

**emphysema:** A long-term lung disease where over-expansion or destruction of the lung tissue blocks oxygen intake, leading to shortness of breath and other problems.

**employed:** Employed people are those aged 15 years and over who, during the reference week: worked for 1 hour or more for pay; worked for 1 hour or more without pay in a family business; or had a job but were not at work because of leave or other reasons. Unemployed are those aged 15 years and over who were not employed in the reference week and: had actively looked for work; were available for work; or were waiting to start a new job or be called back to a job from which they had been stood down for less than 4 weeks. The labour force comprises employed and unemployed; others are described as not in the labour force (ABS Cat. No. 6203.0).

**endoscopy:** The viewing of internal parts of the body, such as the inside of the lower bowel (the colon) with a colonoscope.

**encephalitis:** Inflammation of the brain.

**enterohaemorrhagic *E. coli* infection:** a disease marked by diarrhoea that can be mild, or severe and bloody, and sometimes also the haemolytic-uremic syndrome (sudden kidney failure and anaemia in children) and other symptoms. It is caused by some types of *E. coli* bacteria and is usually food-borne.

**epidemiology:** The study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states and events in populations, and the application of this study to control of health problems.

**expectation of life:** See *life expectancy*.

**external cause:** Environmental event, circumstance and/or condition as the cause of injury, poisoning and/or other adverse effect.

**foetal death:** Birth of a foetus weighing at least 500 grams (or, where birthweight is unavailable, of at least 22 weeks gestation), which shows no signs of life. Commonly referred to as stillbirth.

**foetal death rate:** Number of foetal deaths per 1,000 total births (foetal deaths plus live births).

**freestanding day hospital facility:** A private hospital where only minor operations and other procedures not requiring overnight stay are performed, not forming part of any private hospital providing overnight care.

**gastroscopy:** A procedure whereby the inside of the stomach is viewed using a flexible tube passed down into it via the mouth.

**generalised anxiety disorder:** A disorder characterised by unrealistic or excessive anxiety and worry about life circumstances over an extended period.

**handicap:** A disadvantage resulting from impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal (see Box 2.3, page 22).

**health outcome:** A change in the health of an individual or population due to a preventive or clinical intervention.

**health promotion:** Activities to improve health and prevent disease.

**health status:** An individual or population's overall level of health, taking account of various aspects such as life expectancy, amount of disability, levels of disease risk factors and so forth.

**heart attack:** Emergency illness that occurs when a vessel supplying blood to the heart muscle is suddenly blocked by a blood clot.

**hepatitis:** Inflammation of the liver, which can be due to certain viral infections, alcohol excess or a range of other causes.

**Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae type b*):** A bacterial infection of infants and children that can cause meningitis, pneumonia and other serious effects. Preventable by vaccine.

**Hodgkin's lymphoma:** A particular cancer of the lymphatic system (lymph glands and the channels they are linked to), named after the English physician who described it.

**hostels:** Establishments providing board, lodging or accommodation for the aged, distressed, or disabled who cannot live independently but who do not need nursing care in a hospital or nursing home. Residents are generally responsible for their own provisions, but may be provided with domestic assistance (meals, laundry, personal care). Only hostels subsidised by the Commonwealth are included in statistics.

**hypertensive disease:** Occurs when blood pressure is high long term, especially when this leads to damage of the heart, brain or kidneys.

**hypomania:** A lesser degree of mania characterised by a persistent mild elevation of mood and increased activity lasting at least 4 days.

**immunisation:** Inducing immunity against infection by the use of antigen to stimulate the body to produce its own antibodies. See *vaccination*.

**impairment:** Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

**incidence:** The number of instances of illness commencing, or of persons falling ill, during a given period.

**Indigenous:** A person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which he or she is associated.

**International Classification of Diseases:** WHO's internationally accepted classification of death and disease. The Ninth Revision (ICD-9) is currently in use. In this report, causes of death classified before 1979 under previous revisions have been reclassified to ICD-9 by the AIHW.

**intervention (for health):** Any action taken by society or an individual which 'steps in' (intervenes) to improve health, such as medical treatment and preventive campaigns.

**ischaemic heart disease:** Disease due to a disturbed blood supply to the heart; basically another term for coronary heart disease.

**length of stay:** Duration of hospital stay, calculated by subtracting the date the patient is admitted from the day of separation. All leave days, including the day the patient went on leave, are excluded. A same-day patient is allocated a length of stay of 1 day.

**life expectancy:** Average number of years of life remaining to a person at a particular age if death rates do not change.

**listeriosis:** a disease which normally appears in otherwise healthy people as an acute, mild fever, sometimes with influenza-like symptoms, caused by the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* and usually food-borne. It can cause more severe symptoms, in newborns, the elderly, people with poor immunity and pregnant women (in whom it can also cause abortion).

**low birthweight:** Birth of a baby weighing less than 2,500 grams.

**mania:** A disorder in which mood is happy, elevated, expansive or irritable out of keeping with the person's circumstances lasting at least 7 days.

**Major Diagnostic Categories (MDCs):** A high level of groupings of patients used in the AN-DRG classification.

**measles:** A highly contagious infection, usually of children, that causes flu-like symptoms, fever, a typical rash and sometimes serious secondary problems such as brain damage. Preventable by vaccine.

**median:** The midpoint of a list of observations ranked from the smallest to the largest.

**melanoma:** A cancer of the body's cells that contain pigment (melanin), mainly affecting the skin.

**meningitis:** Inflammation of the brain's covering (the meninges), as can occur with some viral or bacterial infections.

**mental disorder:** The existence of a clinically recognisable set of symptoms or behaviour associated in most cases with distress and with interference with personal functions.

**morbidity:** Any departure, subjective or objective, from a state of physiological or psychological wellbeing.

**mumps:** A contagious viral disease marked by acute and painful swelling of the saliva-producing glands, often similarly affecting the testicles and sometimes other parts.

**neonatal death:** Death of an infant within 28 days of birth.

**neonatal mortality rate:** Number of neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births.

**non-Hodgkin's lymphoma:** A range of cancers of the lymphatic system (lymph glands and the channels they are linked to) which are not of the Hodgkin's variety.

**non-admitted patient:** A patient who receives care from a recognised non-admitted patient service/clinic of a hospital.

**nursing homes:** Establishments which provide long-term care involving regular basic nursing care to chronically ill, frail, disabled or convalescent people or senile inpatients.

**occasion of service:** Occurs when a patient attends a functional unit of the hospital for the purpose of receiving some form of service, but is not admitted.

**obsessive-compulsive disorder:** A disorder characterised by recurrent, persistent ideas, thoughts, images or impulses that intrude into the consciousness against a person's will.

**ophthalmology:** A medical specialty dealing with eye diseases.

**Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):** An organisation of 24 developed countries, including Australia.

**panic disorder:** Characterised by panic attacks (discrete episodes of intense fear or discomfort) that occur suddenly and unpredictably.

**Pap smear:** Papanicolaou smear, a procedure for the detection of cancer and pre-cancerous conditions of the female genital tract.

**pathology:** General term for the study of disease, but often used more specifically for diagnostic services which examine specimens, such as samples of blood or tissue.

***patient days:*** The number of full or partial days of stay for patients who were admitted for an episode of care and who underwent separation during the reporting period. A patient who is admitted and separated on the same day is allocated 1 patient day.

***performance indicators:*** Measures of the efficiency and effectiveness of health services (hospitals, health centres, etc.) in the provision of health care.

***perinatal:*** Pertaining to or occurring in the period shortly before or (usually 28 days) after birth.

***perinatal death:*** Foetal or neonatal death.

***perinatal mortality rate:*** Number of perinatal deaths per 1,000 total births (foetal deaths plus live births).

***peripheral vascular disease:*** Reduced blood supply to the legs, causing pain when walking.

***pertussis (whooping cough):*** A highly infectious bacterial disease of the air passages marked by explosive fits of coughing and often a whooping sound on breathing in. Preventable by vaccine.

***poliomyelitis (polio):*** Muscle paralysis, wasting and deformity of limbs after infection by a common virus (poliovirus) that can damage the so-called motor nerves in the spinal cord. Preventable by vaccine.

***post-traumatic stress disorder:*** A delayed and/or protracted response to a psychologically distressing event, usually associated with fear, terror and helplessness.

***potential years of life lost (PYLL):*** Number of potential years of life lost in a population as a result of premature death.

***prescription drugs:*** Pharmaceutical drugs available only on the prescription of a registered medical practitioner and available only from pharmacies.

***prevalence:*** The number of instances of a given disease or other condition in a given population at a designated time.

***principal diagnosis:*** The diagnosis established after study to be chiefly responsible for occasioning the patient's episode of care in hospital.

***principal procedure:*** The most significant procedure that was performed for treatment of the principal diagnosis.

***private health insurance:*** See Box 6.3, page 174.

***private hospitals:*** Privately owned and operated institutions, catering for patients who are treated by a doctor of their own choice. Patients are charged fees for accommodation and other services provided by the hospital and relevant medical and paramedical practitioners. Includes private freestanding day hospital facilities.

***private patients:*** Eligible persons who, on admission, elect to be treated by the medical practitioner of their own choice and who are charged fees for accommodation and other services provided by the hospital and relevant medical practitioners, or elect to be accommodated in a single room in a public hospital.

**prostate cancer:** Cancer of the prostate, the male organ that sits next to the urinary bladder and contributes to the semen (sperm fluid).

**psychiatric hospitals:** Establishments devoted primarily to the treatment and care of inpatients with psychiatric, mental or behavioural disorders.

**public health:** Health activities which aim to benefit a population. Prevention, protection and promotion of health are emphasised, as distinct from treatment tailored to individuals with symptoms. Examples include provision of a clean water supply and good sewerage, conduct of anti-smoking education campaigns and screening for diseases such as cancer of the breast and cervix.

**public hospitals:** Establishments controlled by State and Territory health authorities which provide acute care. They provide free shared-ward accommodation and treatment by a hospital-appointed doctor. In addition, they provide, to those who choose to be private patients, private ward accommodation and/or doctor of choice.

**public patients:** Eligible persons who, on admission to a public hospital, elect to be public patients and who are not charged for the care and treatment provided by the hospital.

**radiology:** The use or study of X-rays and other rays to help view internal parts of the body as a guide to diagnosis as well as to treatment and its progress.

**real expenditure:** Expenditure expressed in terms which have been adjusted for inflation (for example, in 1989–90 dollars). This enables comparisons to be made between expenditures in different years.

**recurrent expenditure:** Expenditure on goods and services which are used up during the year (for example, salaries). It may be contrasted with capital expenditure, such as expenditure on hospital buildings and large-scale diagnostic equipment, the useful life of which extends over a number of years.

**refraction:** The eye's ability to bend light rays that enter it, to form an image at the back of the eye.

**renal dialysis:** A treatment for kidney failure where the patient is connected to a machine which does the kidneys' work by filtering the blood to control its contents.

**rheumatic heart disease:** Disease from damaged heart valves caused by childhood attack of rheumatic fever.

**risk factor:** An attribute or exposure that is associated with an increased probability of a specified outcome, such as the occurrence of a disease. Risk factors are not necessarily causes of disease.

**rubella (German measles):** A contagious viral disease of children and young adults which has mild symptoms but which often causes serious birth defects if it occurs in a mother during the first 3 months of pregnancy. Preventable by vaccine.

**salmonellosis:** a disease commonly marked by sudden onset of headache, abdominal pain, fever, diarrhoea, nausea and sometimes vomiting, caused by some types of *Salmonella* bacteria and often food-borne.

**same-day patients:** Admitted patients who are admitted and separated on the same day.

**schizophrenia:** A disorder characterised by fundamental distortions of thinking and perception, marked by a tendency to withdraw from reality and inappropriate responses and mood.

**separation:** The formal process by which a hospital records the completion of treatment and/or care for an admitted patient. See Box 7.1, page 198.

**SF-36:** Short Form 36—widely used questionnaire to measure general health and wellbeing.

**shigellosis:** a disease characterised by acute diarrhoea with fever, nausea and sometimes other symptoms, usually transmitted directly from person to person via the faecal-oral route. It is caused by *Shigella* species bacteria, including *Shigella dysenteriae* 1, the cause of dysentery.

**social phobia:** A persistent, irrational fear of being the focus of attention, or fear of behaving in a way that will be embarrassing or humiliating.

**stillbirth:** See *foetal death*.

**stroke:** Occurs when an artery supplying blood to the brain suddenly becomes blocked or bleeds, often causing paralysis of parts of the body or speech problems.

**substance use disorders:** Result from harmful use and/or dependence on drugs and/or alcohol.

**symptom:** Any evidence of disease apparent to the patient.

**tetanus:** A serious infection with a bacterial nerve poison causing spasm of the jaw muscles (lockjaw) and body muscles generally, from a bacterium entering through a wound. The disease is preventable by vaccine.

**Torres Strait Islander:** A person of Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as a Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.

**tuberculosis:** A bacterial disease that affects the lungs especially, with serious fever-like symptoms and destruction of tissue; can spread to other parts of the body, causing secondary problems and often death if not treated.

**vaccination:** The process of administering a vaccine to a person to produce immunity against infection. See *immunisation*.

**whooping cough:** See *pertussis*.

**yersiniosis:** a disease typically involving acute diarrhoea, fever, and other abdominal symptoms, caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* and *Yersinia enterocolitica* and often food-borne.