Human Physiology

University Medicine · Vocabulary in context

Word	Example
human physiology	**Human physiology** studies how the body works.
homeostasis /ˌhəʊmiːəˈstɑːsiz/	**Homeostasis** keeps body temperature and blood sugar steady.
intracellular fluid	**Intracellular fluid** is the water inside cells.
extracellular fluid	**Extracellular fluid** is the water outside cells, such as blood plasma.
negative feedback /ˈnegətɪv ˈfiːdbæk/	**Negative feedback** brings body temperature back to normal.
action potential /ˈækʃn pəˈtenʃl/	An **action potential** travels along the nerve.
absolute refractory period	During the **absolute refractory period**, the nerve cannot fire again.
saltatory conduction /ˈsɒltətəri kənˈdʌkʃn/	In **saltatory conduction**, the signal jumps along the nerve.
tetanus	In **tetanus**, many quick twitches join into one strong, steady contraction.
cardiac output /ˈkɑːdiæk ˈaʊtpʊt/	**Cardiac output** is heart rate times stroke volume.
systemic vascular resistance	**Systemic vascular resistance** is how hard it is for blood to flow through the body's vessels.
pressure–volume loop	A **pressure–volume loop** shows how the heart fills and empties in one beat.

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stroke volume /strəʊk ˈvɒljuːm/	**Stroke volume** is the amount of blood pumped by each beat.
Starling's law	**Starling's law** says the more the heart fills, the harder it pumps.
alveolar gas equation	The **alveolar gas equation** works out the oxygen level in the air sacs.
oxygen dissociation curve /ˈɒksɪdʒn dɪˌsəʊsɪˈeɪʃn kɜːv/	The **oxygen dissociation curve** shows how much oxygen haemoglobin holds at each oxygen level.
A–a gradient	A large **A–a gradient** means oxygen is not passing well from the lungs into the blood.
filtration /fɪlˈtreɪʃn/	**Filtration** in the kidney pushes water and small molecules out of the blood.
glomerular filtration rate	A normal **glomerular filtration rate** filters about 180 litres a day. 180
aldosterone	**Aldosterone** makes the kidney keep sodium and lose potassium.
ADH /ˌeɪ diː ˈeɪtʃ/	**ADH** makes the kidneys save water.
clearance /ˈklɪərəns/	**Clearance** is how much plasma is cleaned of a substance each minute.
Henderson–Hasselbalch equation	The **Henderson–Hasselbalch equation** links pH to the amounts of acid and base. pH
enteric nervous system	The **enteric nervous system** controls the gut by itself.

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hypothalamus /ˌhaɪpəʊˈθælæməs/	The **hypothalamus** in the brain checks the water level of the blood.
pituitary /pɪˈtjuːɪtəri/	The **pituitary** gland controls many other glands.
target gland	The thyroid is a **target gland** of the pituitary.
menstrual cycle /ˈmenstruːəl ˈsaɪkl/	The **menstrual cycle** lasts about 28 days.

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