

Pathology (from the [Ancient Greek](#) roots of *pathos* (πάθος), meaning "experience" or "suffering", and *-logia* (-λογία), "study of") is a significant component of the [causal](#) study of [disease](#) and a major field in modern [medicine](#) and [diagnosis](#).

The term pathology itself may be used broadly to refer to the study of disease in general, incorporating a wide range of [bioscience](#) research fields and medical practices (including [plant pathology](#) and [veterinary pathology](#)), or more narrowly to describe work within the contemporary medical field of "general pathology," which includes a number of distinct but inter-related [medical specialties](#) which diagnose disease mostly through the analysis of [tissue](#), [cell](#), and [body fluid](#) samples. Used as a [count noun](#), "a pathology" (plural, "pathologies") can also refer to the predicted or actual progression of particular diseases (as in the statement "the many different forms of [cancer](#) have diverse pathologies"), and the [affix](#) *path* is sometimes used to indicate a state of disease in cases of both physical ailment (as in [cardiomyopathy](#)) and [psychological](#) conditions (such as [psychopathy](#)).^[1] Similarly, a **pathological** condition is one caused by disease, rather than occurring [physiologically](#). A [physician](#) practicing pathology is called a pathologist.

As a field of general inquiry and research, pathology addresses four components of disease: cause/[etiology](#), mechanisms of development ([pathogenesis](#)), structural alterations of cells (morphologic changes), and the consequences of changes (clinical manifestations).^[2] In common medical practice, general pathology is mostly concerned with analyzing known clinical abnormalities that are markers or precursors for both [infectious](#) and [non-infectious](#) disease and is conducted by experts in one of two major specialties, [anatomical pathology](#) and [clinical pathology](#). Further divisions in specialty exist on the basis of the involved sample types (comparing, for example, [cytopathology](#), [hematopathology](#), and [histopathology](#)), organs (as in [renal pathology](#)), and physiological systems ([oral pathology](#)), as well as on the basis of the focus of the examination (as with [forensic pathology](#)).

The [sense](#) of the word *pathology* as a synonym of *disease* or *pathosis* is very common in [health care](#). The persistence of this [usage](#) despite attempted proscription is [discussed elsewhere](#).