

epithelium noun

ep·i·the·li·um (,e-pə-'thē-lē-əm 

plural **epithelia** (,e-pə-'thē-lē-ə 

- 1 : a membranous cellular tissue that covers a free surface or lines a tube or cavity of an animal body and serves especially to enclose and protect the other parts of the body, to produce secretions and excretions, and to function in assimilation
- 2 : a usually thin layer of parenchyma that lines a cavity or tube of a plant



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Two light microscope images representing the junctional **epithelium**.

—Hannah Millington, *MSNBC Newsweek*, 30 July 2025

Our intestinal lining, or **epithelium**, rapidly and continually renews itself, replacing its

Tellurium mesh devices were implanted into a narrow space between the photoreceptor layer and the retinal pigment ***epithelium***, a site where the implants could interface with the neurons.

—*ArsTechnica*, 12 June 2025

A number of other mammals have structures inside their noses called the vomeronasal organ (VNO) and main olfactory ***epithelium*** (MOE) designed to detect pheromones.

—Bruce Y. Lee, *Forbes.com*, 29 Mar. 2025

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Etymology

New Latin, from *epi-* + Greek *thēlē* nipple — more at [FEMININE](#)

First Known Use

1748, in the meaning defined at [sense 1](#)

Time Traveler

The first known use of ***epithelium*** was in
1748

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MLA

“Epithelium.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epithelium. Accessed 5 Aug. 2025.

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epithelium noun

ep·i·the·li·um (*ep-i-thē-lee-əm*

plural **epithelia** (-lē-ə

- 2 : a usually thin layer of cells of a plant that is part of the parenchyma and lines a cavity or tube

-lē-əl **adjective**

epithelium noun

ep·i·the·li·um (,ep-ə-'thē-lē-əm )

plural **epithelia** (-lē-ə )

: a membranous cellular tissue that covers a free surface or lines a tube or cavity of an animal body and serves especially to enclose and protect the other parts of the body, to produce secretions and excretions, and to function in assimilation

[Britannica.com: Encyclopedia article about epithelium](#)

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