



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Epithelium

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002363.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002363.htm)

Epithelium

The term "epithelium" refers to layers of cells that line hollow organs and glands. It is also those cells that make up the outer surface of the body.

Information

Epithelial cells help to protect or enclose organs. Most produce mucus or other secretions.

Certain types of epithelial cells have tiny hairs called cilia, which help remove foreign substances.

Epithelial cells are arranged in single, or multiple layers, depending on the organ and location.

Alternative Names

Epithelial cells

References

Dinulos JGH. Principles of diagnosis and anatomy. In: Dinulos JGH, ed. *Habif's Clinical Dermatology: A Color Guide in Diagnosis and Therapy*. 7th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2021:chap 1.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epithelium [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epithelium>].

Accessed October 21, 2024.

Review Date 10/9/2024

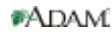
Updated by: Linda J. Vorvick, MD, Clinical Professor, Department of Family Medicine, UW Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider (www.urac.org). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health