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Prefixes and Suffixes

A lot of new and interesting words are thrown at you when you first start an A&P course. Prefixes and suffixes are important building blocks for creating and changing the meanings of medical terms. Let's take a look at some!

A **prefix** is attached to the front of a root word, and in doing so changes its meaning, much in the same way a suffix does.

Prefixes tell something about the root word, such as placement, whether it's positive or negative, etc. It gives an expectation.

Therm is the root word for "heat."

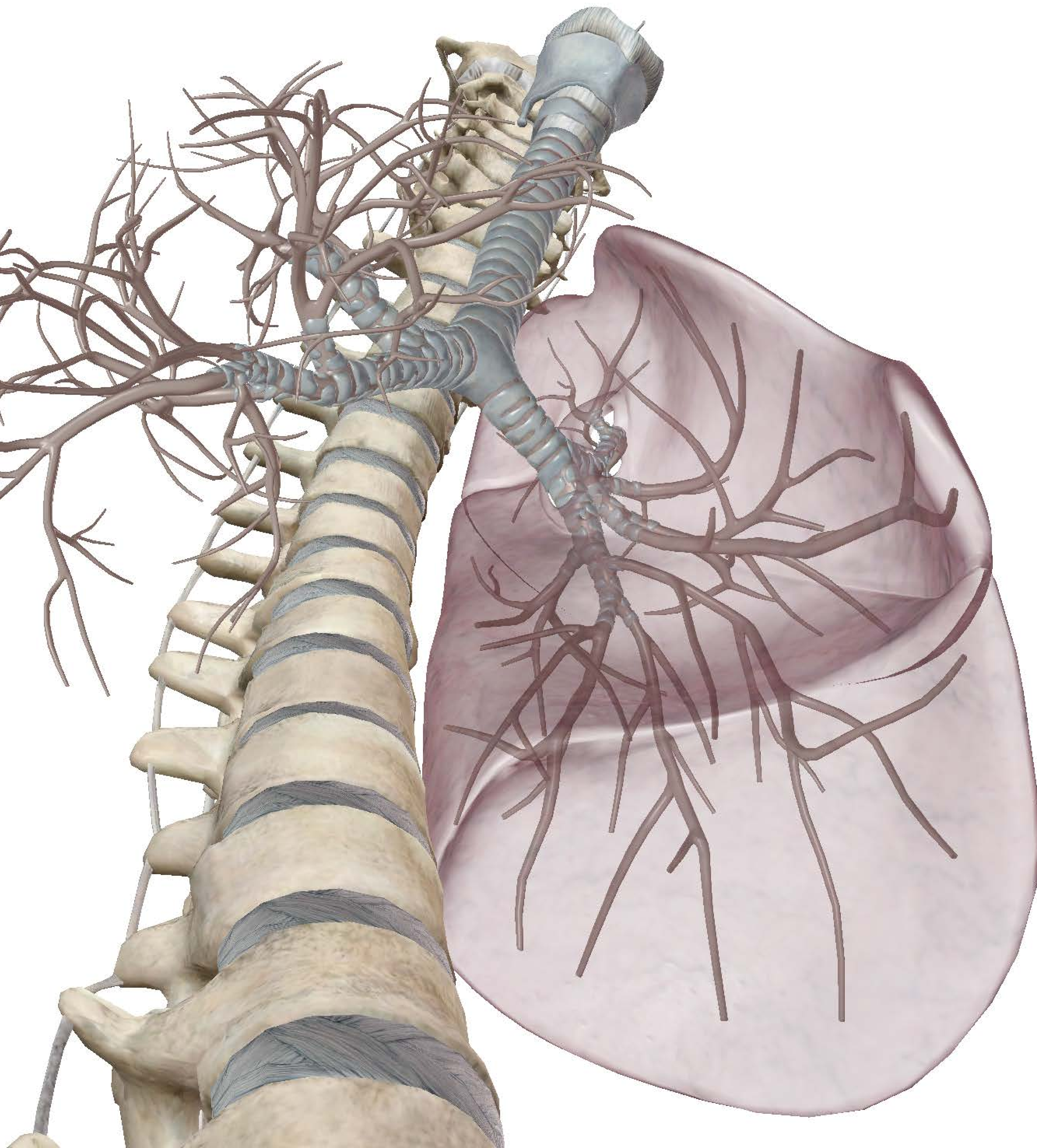
Add the prefix **Endo-** ("inner, within") to that word and it becomes:

Endotherm

An endotherm is an organism that maintains a constant body temperature, or inner heat, independent of the environment.

Got it? Great!

Let's begin.



A- / An- / Anano, not, against

Anaphylaxis is a severe, possibly fatal allergic reaction.

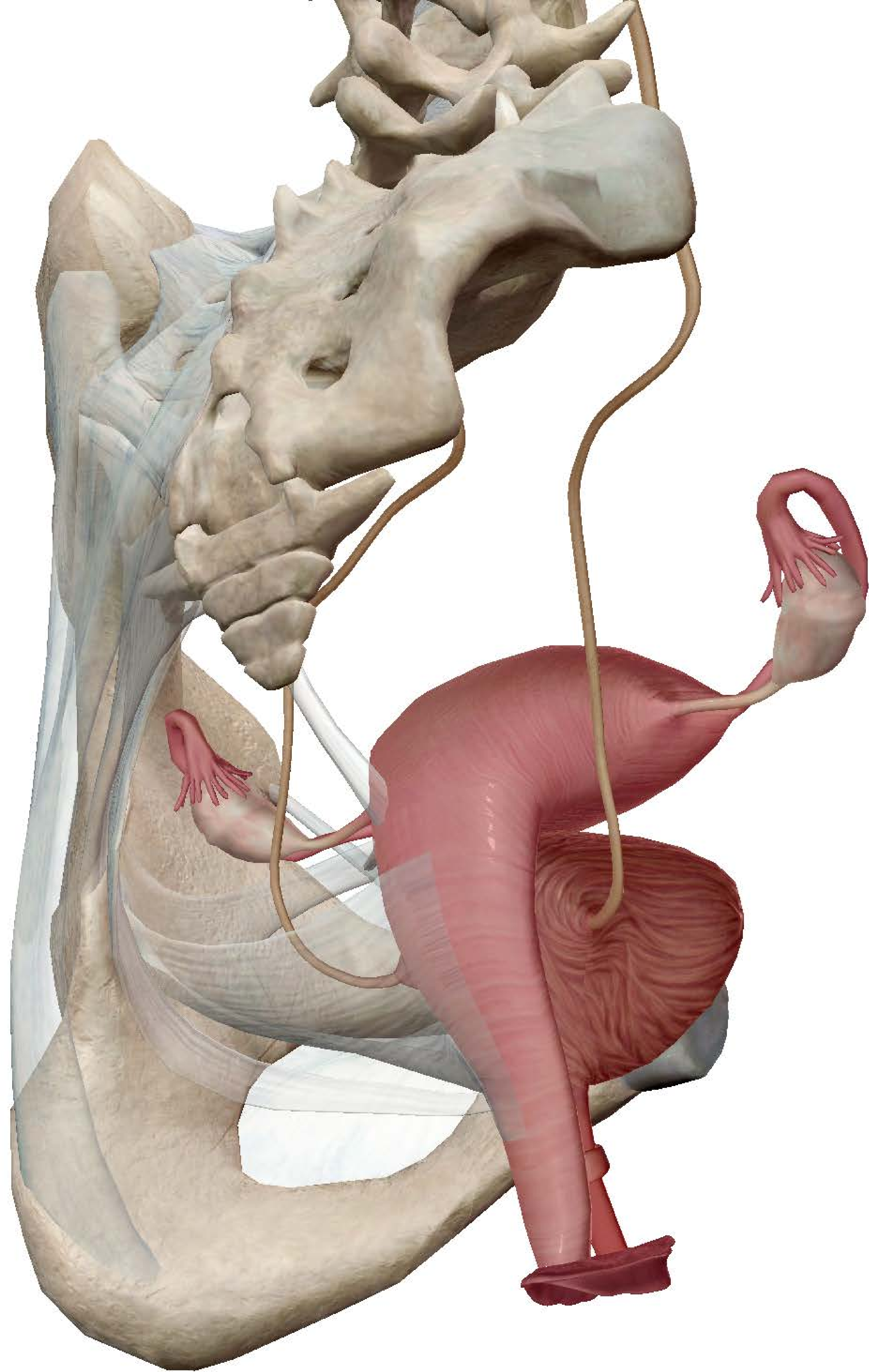
From the Greek words *ana* meaning “against” and *phylaxis* meaning “protection, guarding.”

Dia- complete

A **diagnosis** is a complete definition of an ailment or disease.

Pictured here: osteoarthritis of the knee joint



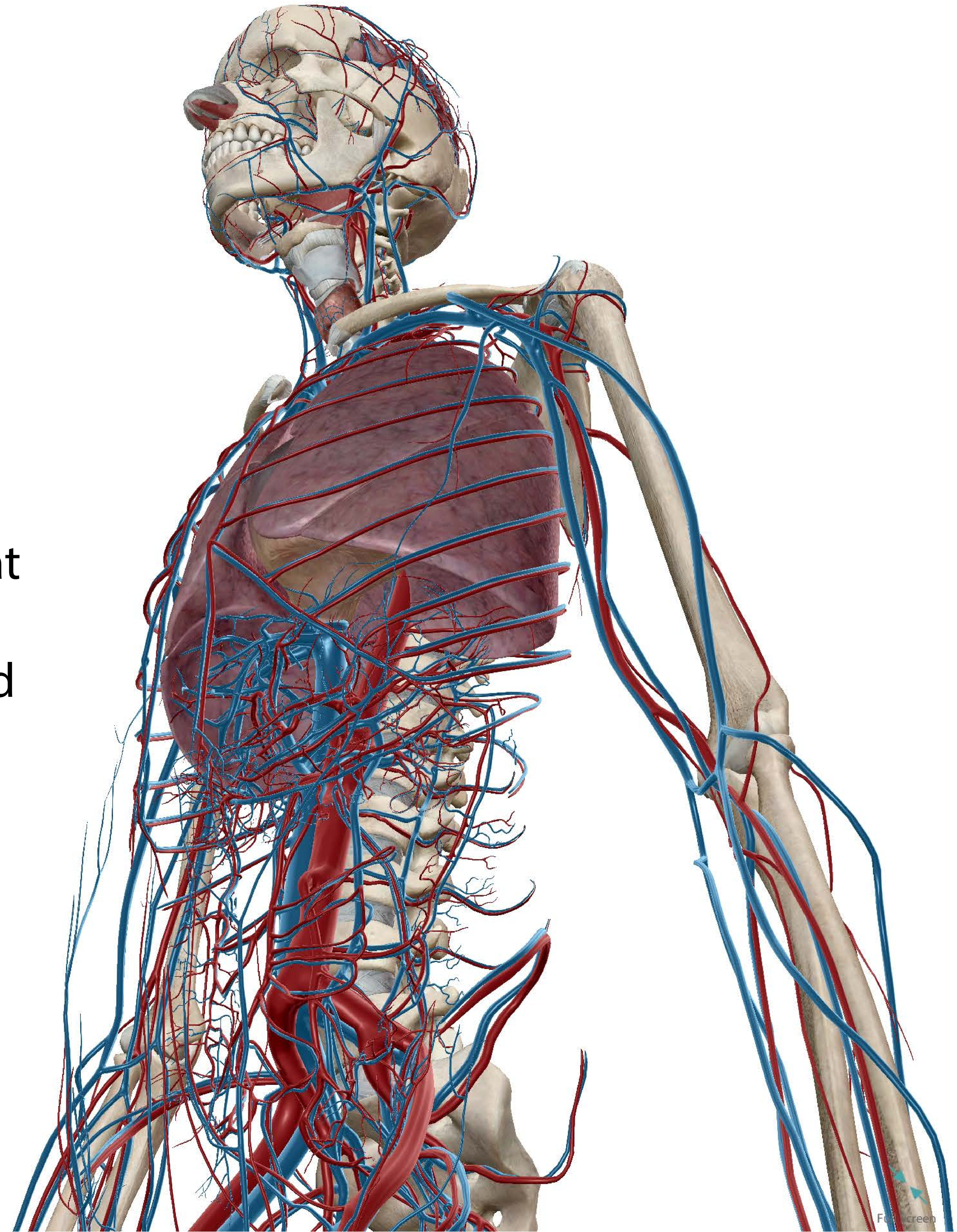


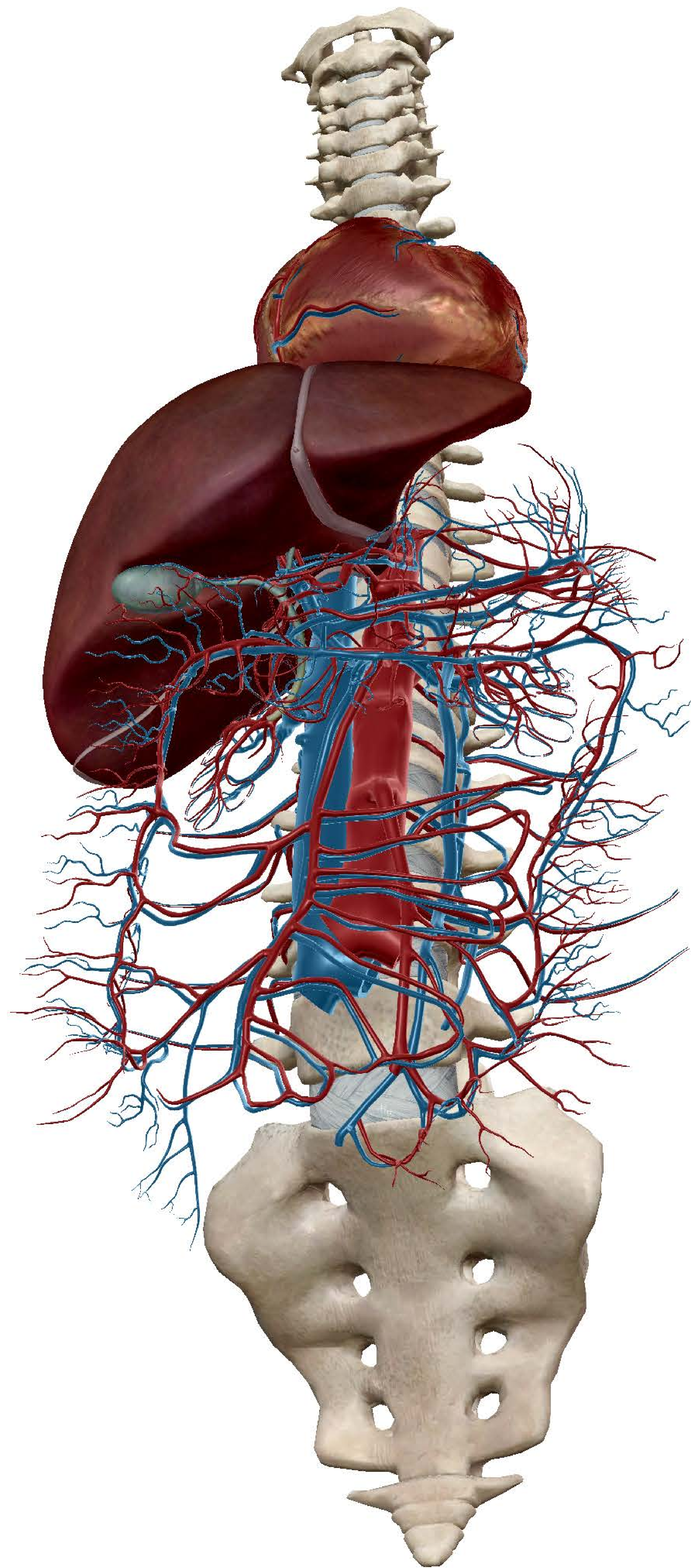
Ecto- outer, outside

An **ectopic** pregnancy occurs when the embryo implants outside the uterus.

Hyper- too much, excessive

Hyperventilation is rapid breathing that can cause dizziness or breathlessness, as more CO₂ is removed from the blood than the body can produce.





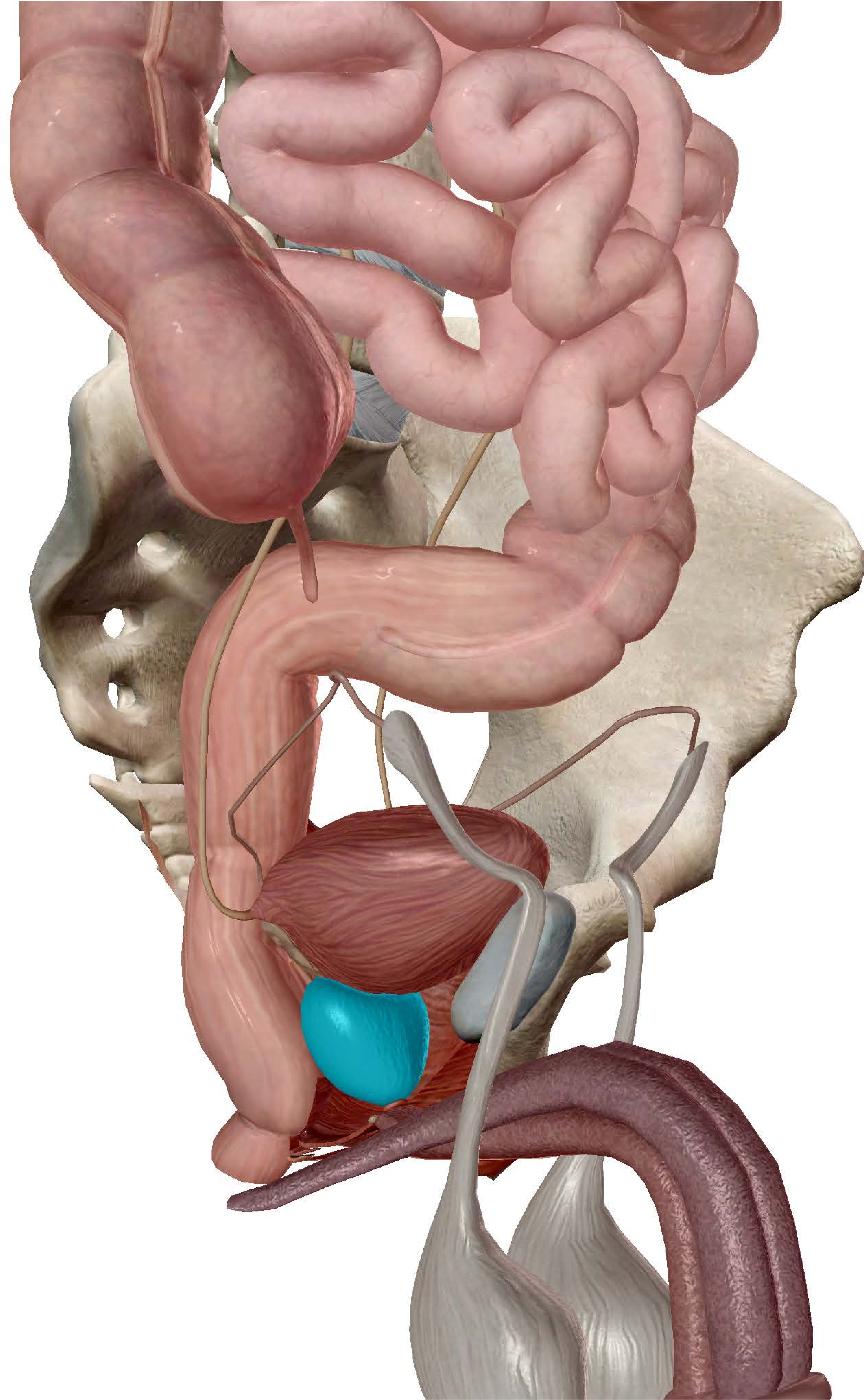
Hypo- too little, below normal

Hypoglycemia is a medical emergency in which blood glucose drops to an unsafe level and cannot adequately fuel the body.

Peri- around, surrounding

The **peritonium** is the transparent tissue that lines the abdominal wall and most of the abdominal organs.



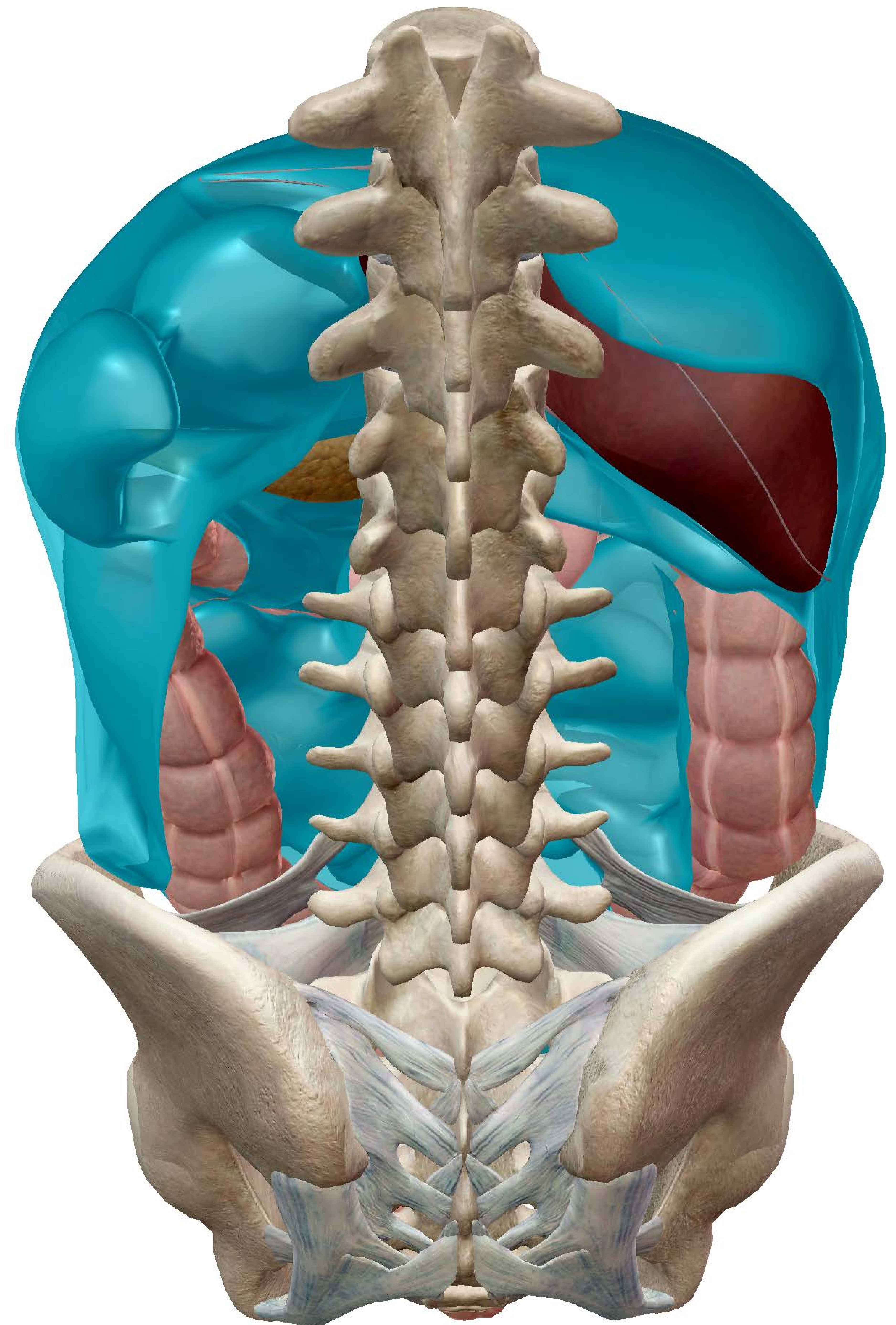


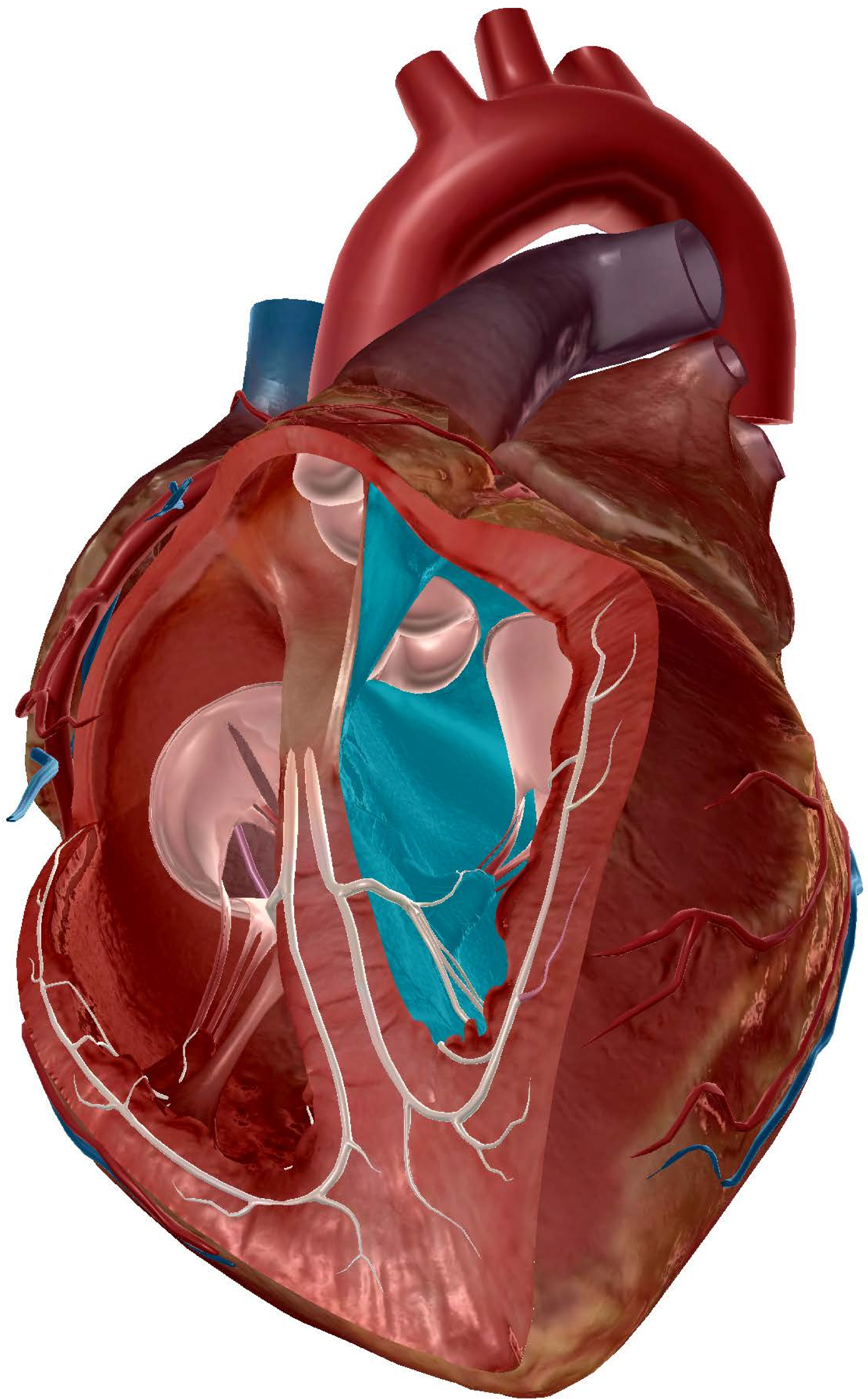
Pro- before, in front

The **pro**state is named for its placement before the urinary bladder.

Retro- behind

The **retro**peritoneum is the space between the posterior abdominal wall and the peritoneum. The kidneys and the head, neck, and body of the pancreas are in this space.



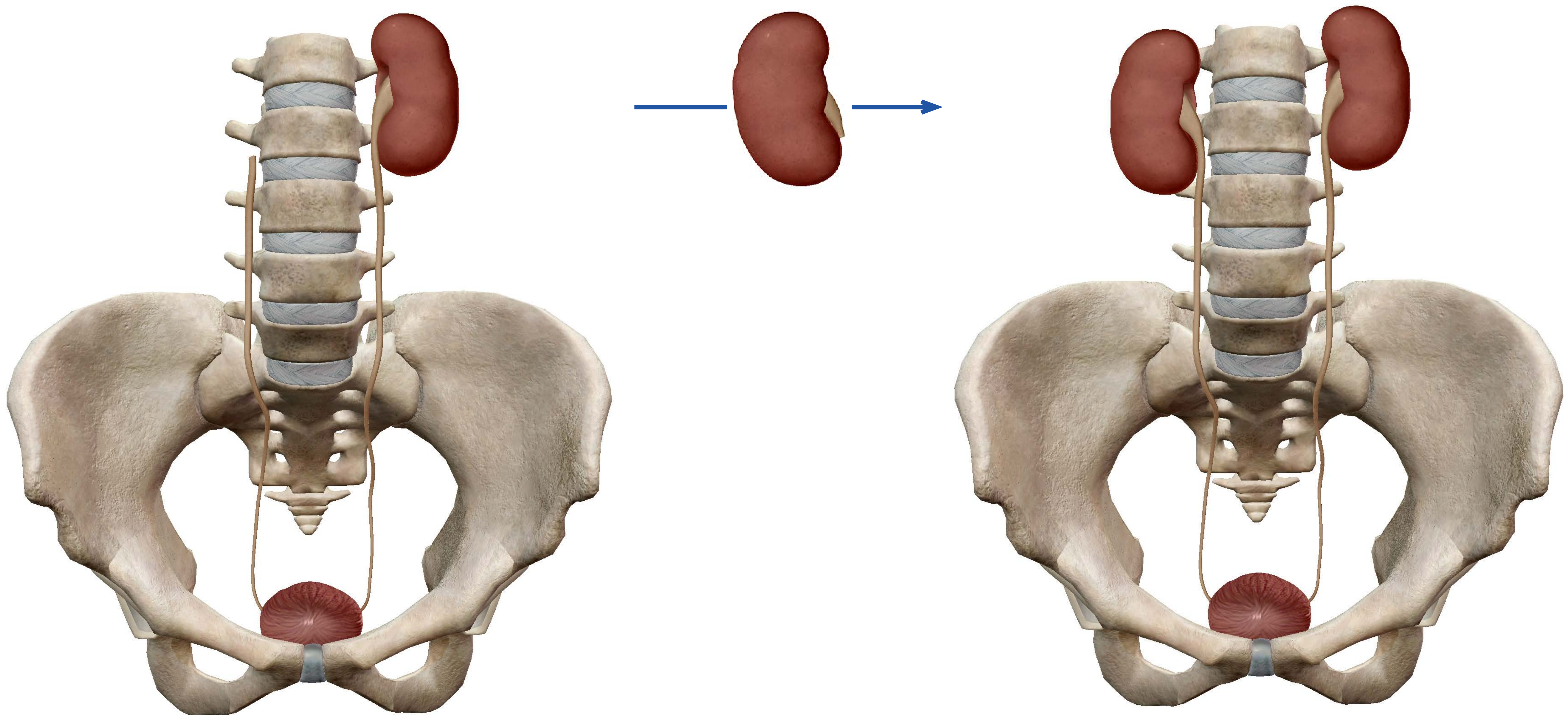


Sub- below

A **sub**aortic stenosis is an obstruction in the left ventricle below the aortic valve.

Trans- through, across

An organ **trans**plant is a procedure in which an organ is moved from one body to another.



A **suffix** is a word added to the end of another word to change its meaning.

Suffixes usually change the word class (ie, from a noun to a verb) or state of a root word. They can often refer to a condition, disorder, or procedure.

Derm[at] is the root word for "skin."

Add the suffix **-ology** ("the study of") to that word and it becomes:

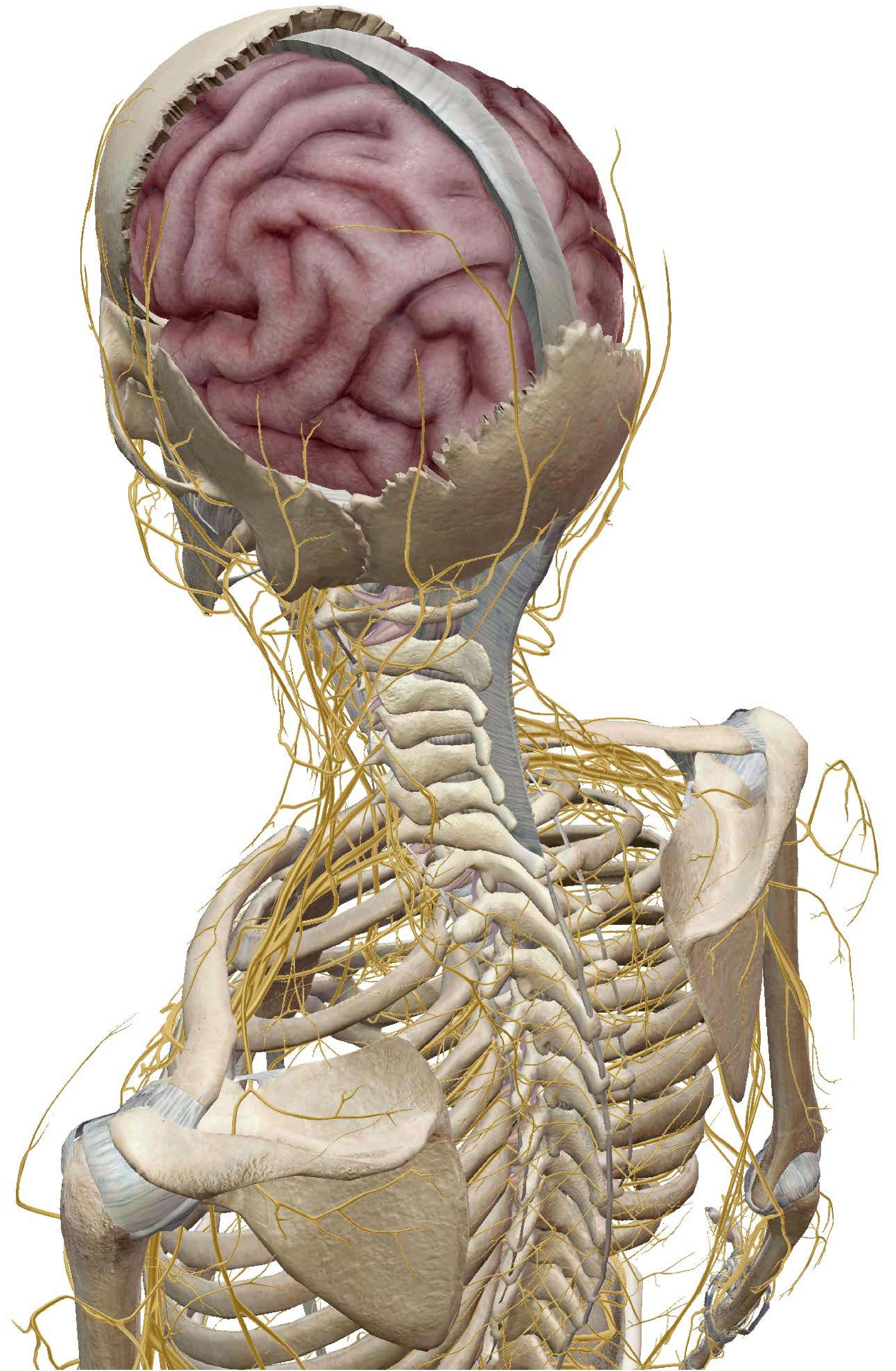
Dermatology

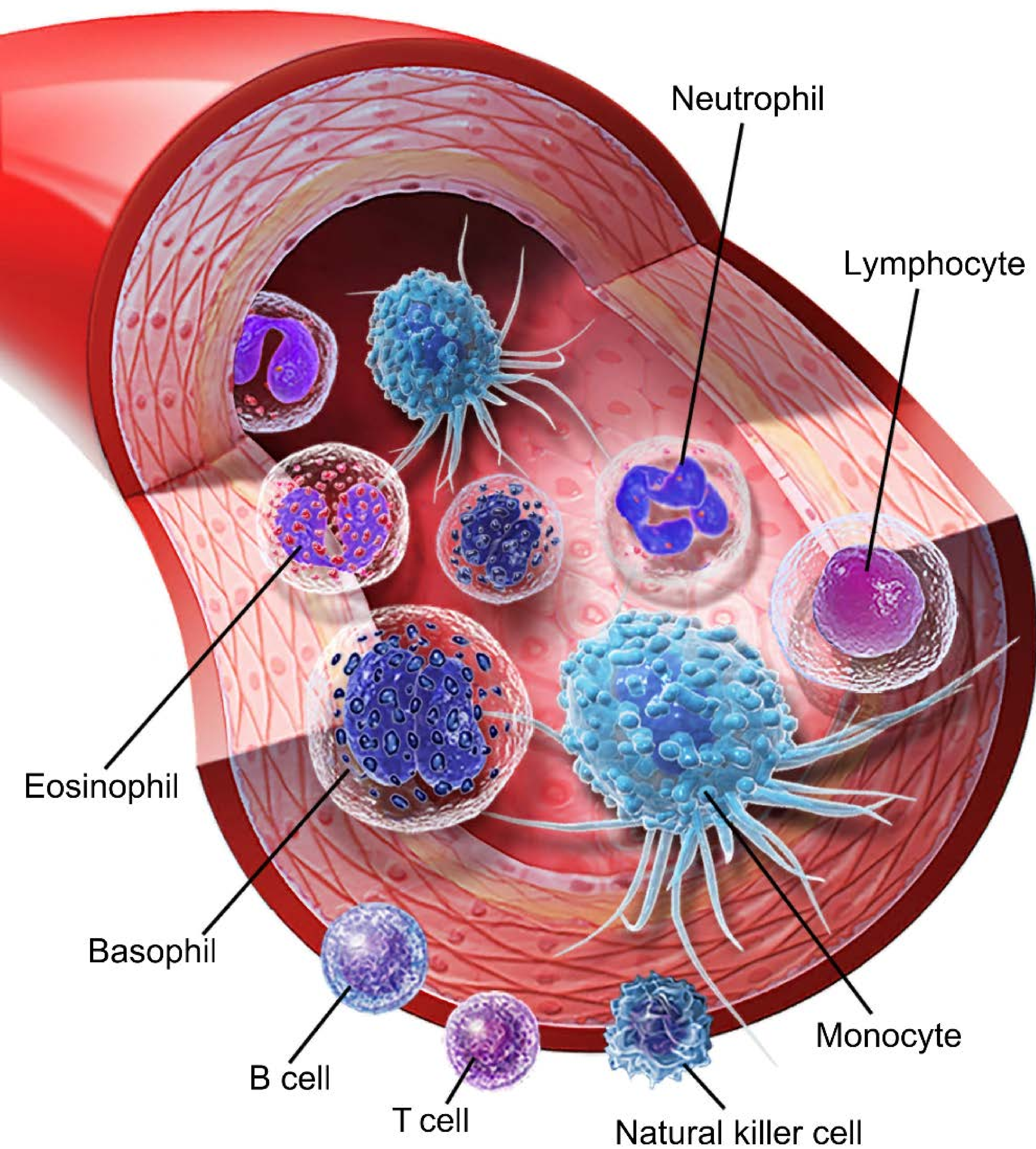
Dermatology is the study of skin, hair, nails, and associated diseases.

-algia pain

Fibromy**algia** is a common ailment in which a person experiences chronic, widespread pain.

“Fibro” is Latin for “fibrous tissues” and “myo” is Greek for “muscle”.



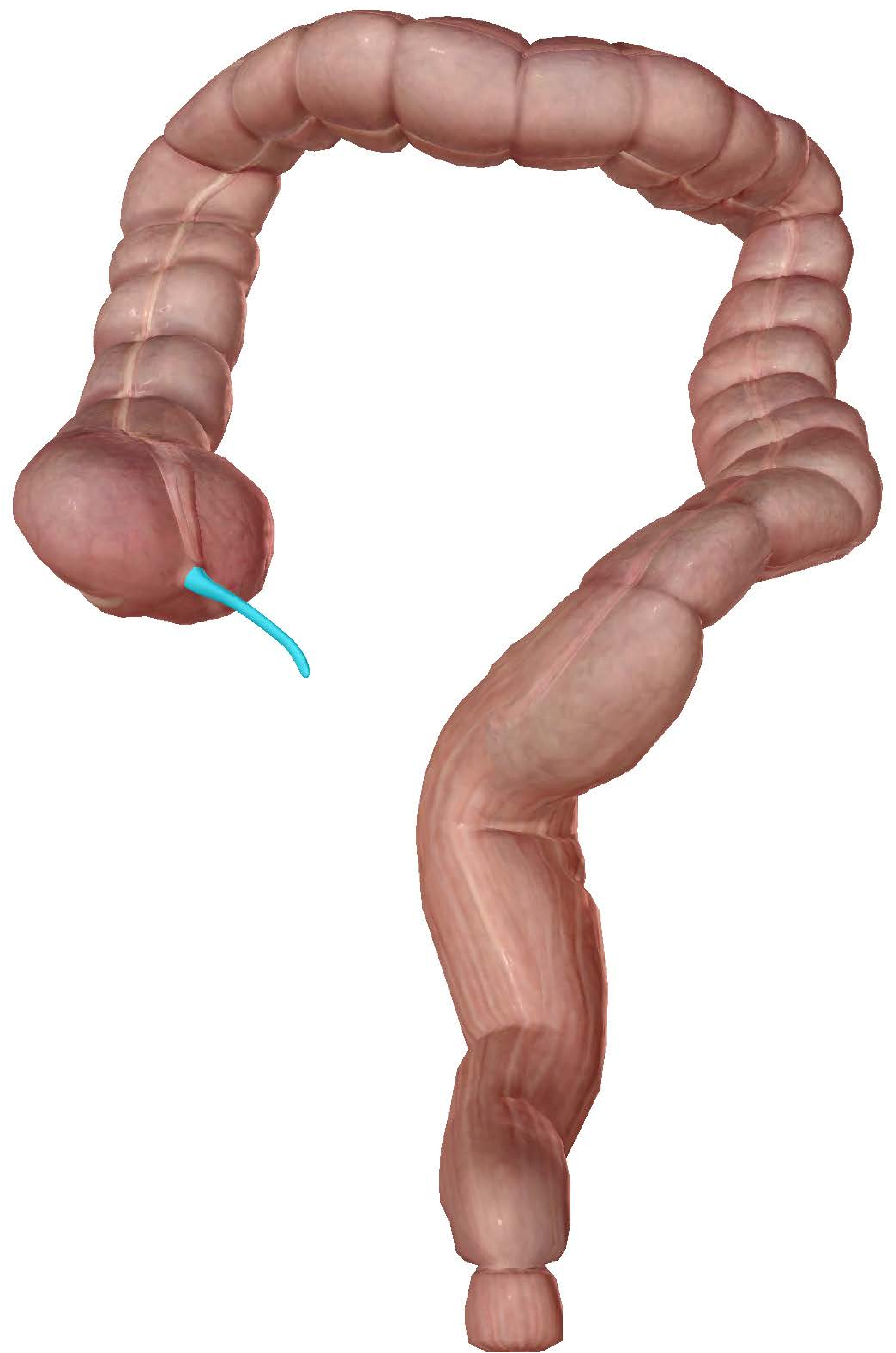


-cyte cell

A lymphoc**yte** is a white blood cell that acts as part of the immune system.

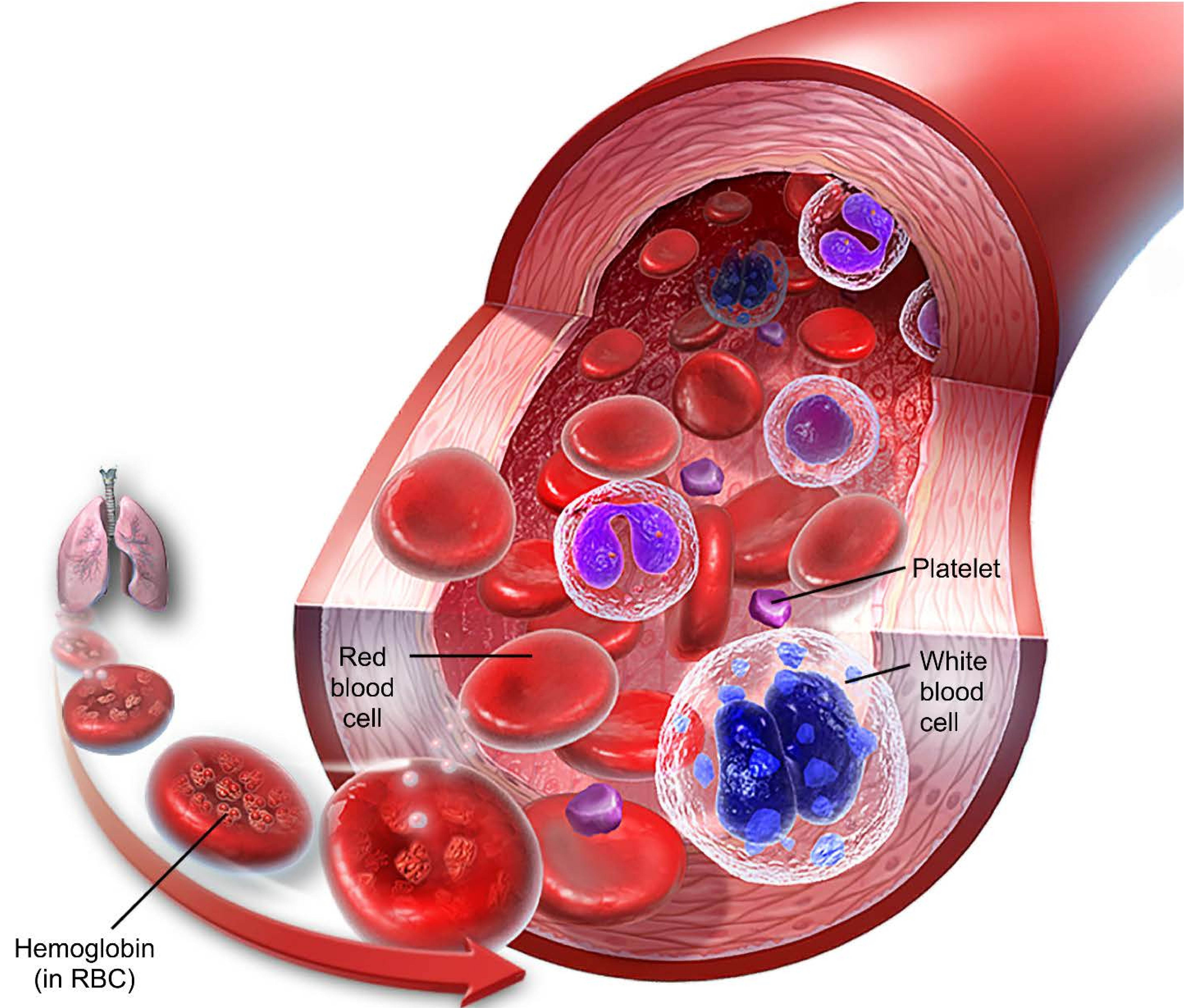
-ectomy removal

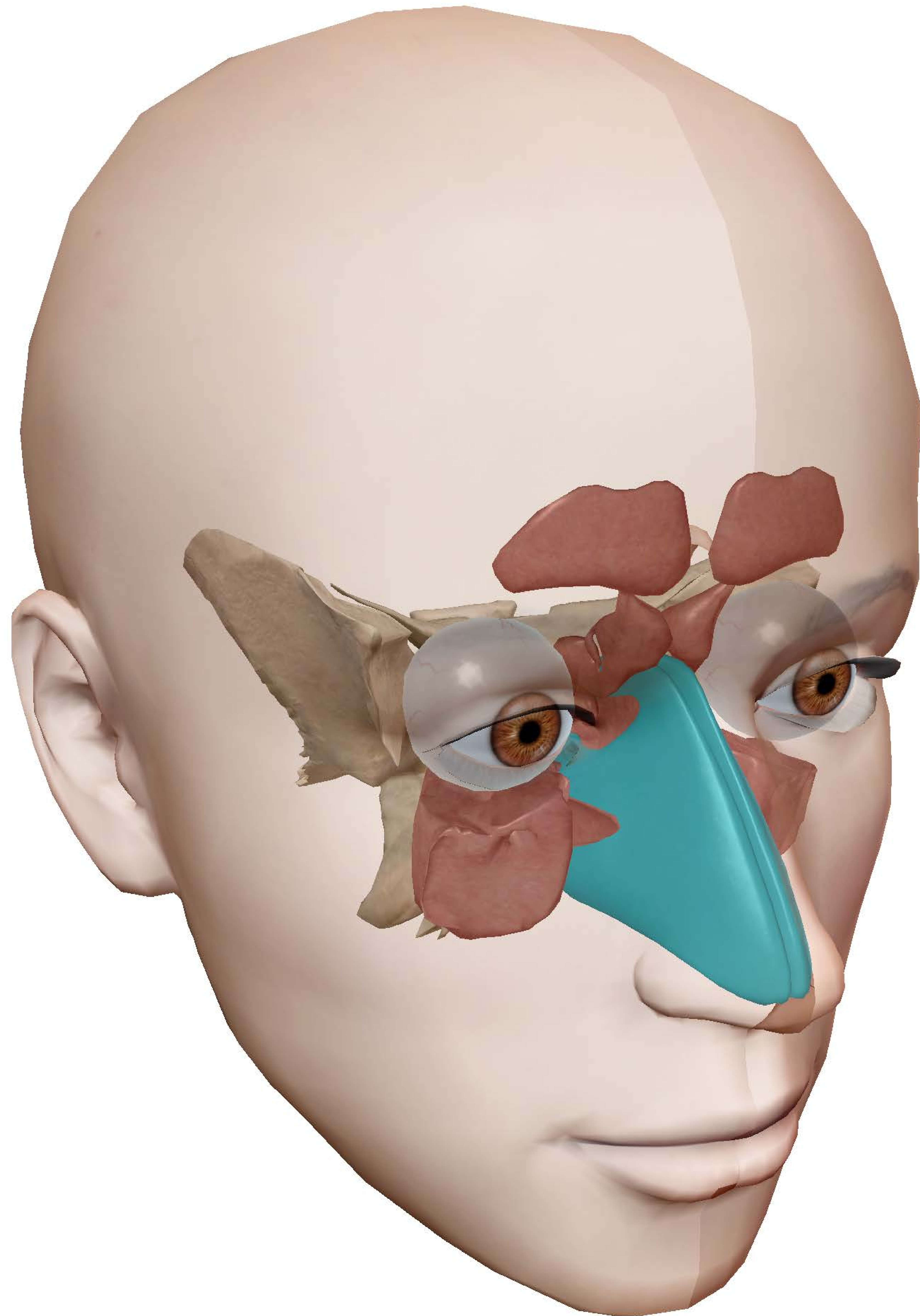
Append**ectomy**, the removal of the appendix, is the most commonly performed emergency surgery in the United States.



-emia blood condition

To help treat **anemia**, or low blood iron, include leafy greens, red meat, and legumes in one's diet.



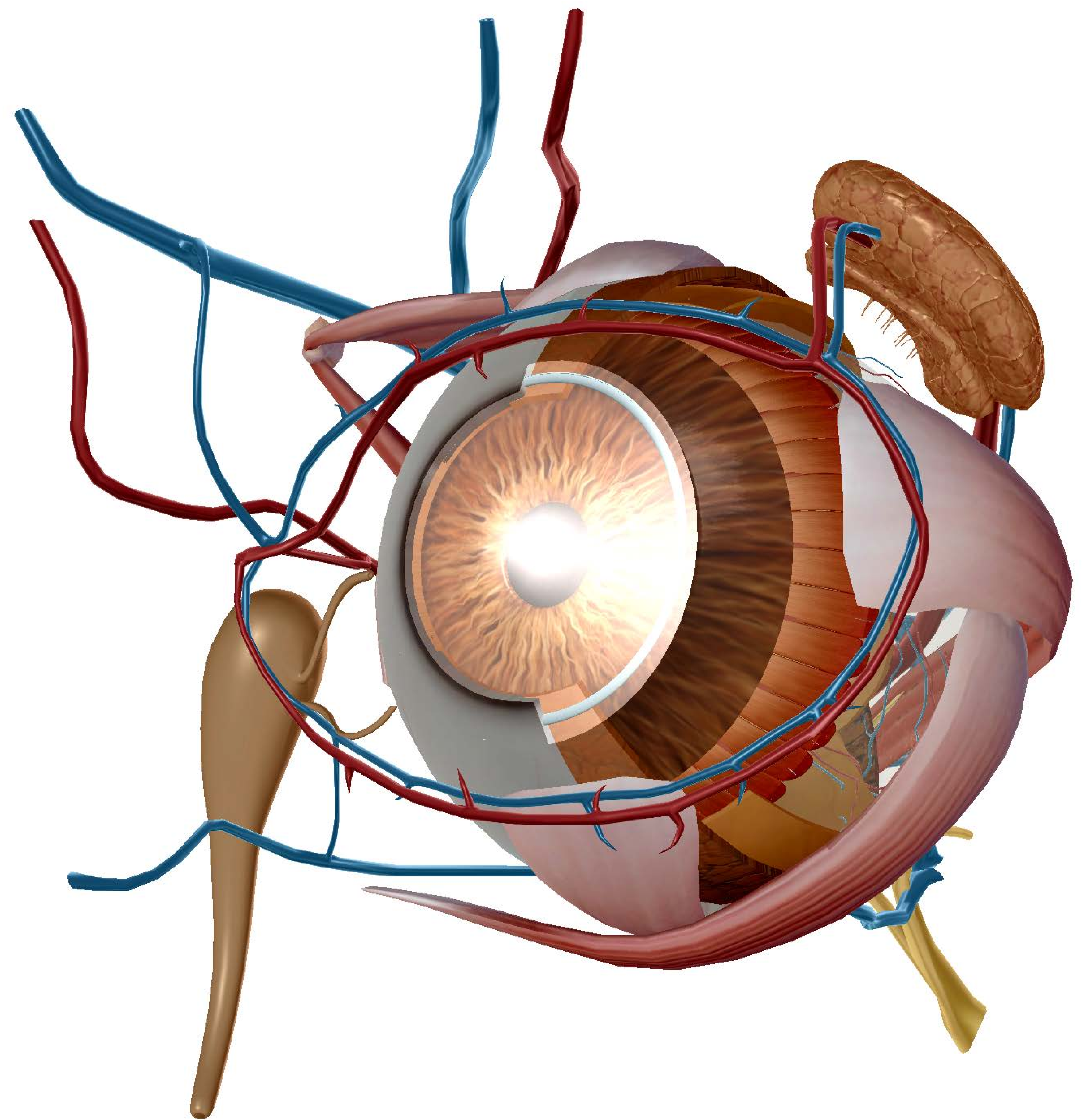


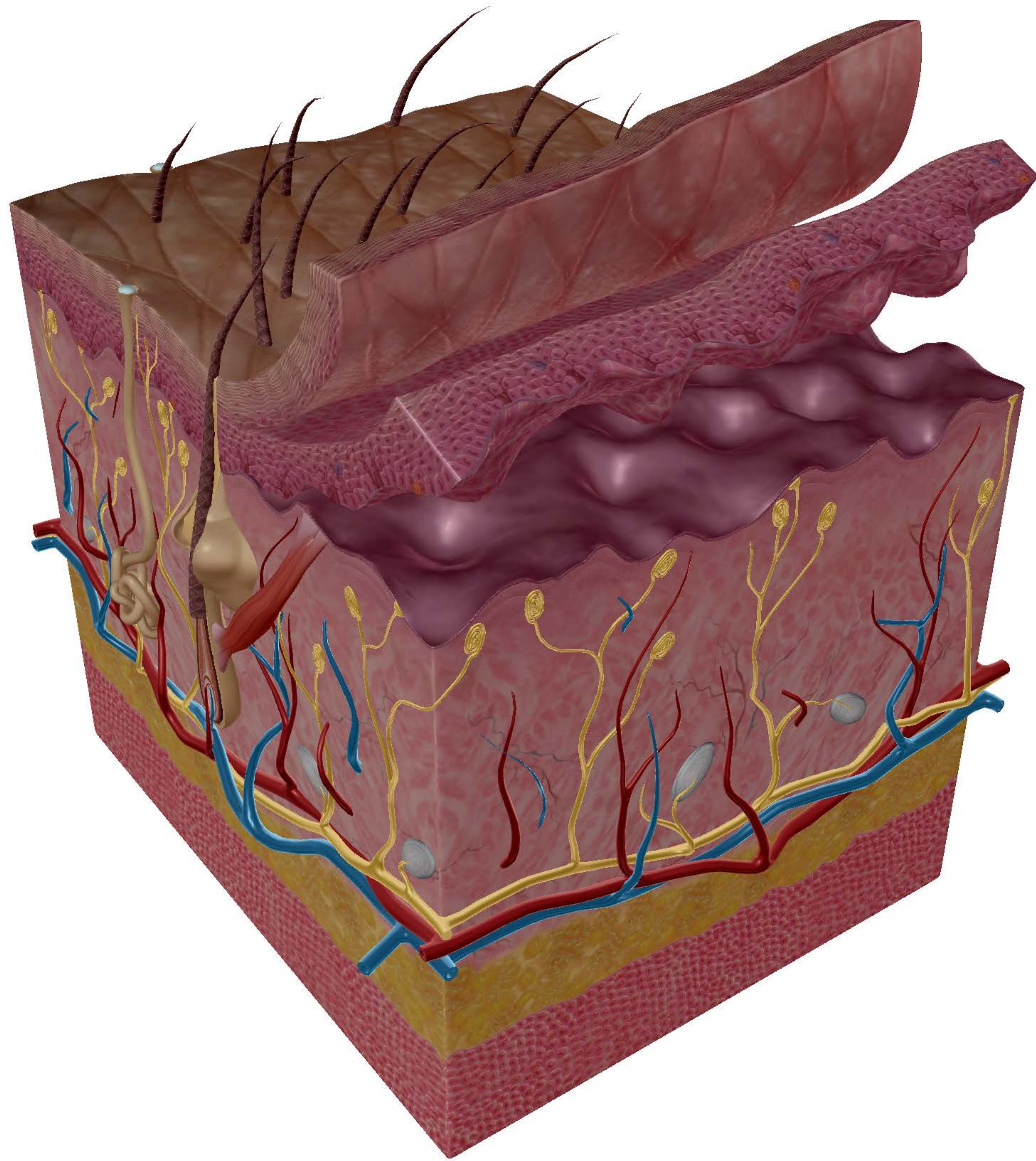
-itis **inflammation**

Rhinitis is one of the most common ailments—inflammation of the mucous membrane in the nose. Symptoms include a runny nose, sniffing, and postnasal drip.

-oma
tumor, mass

A scintillating scotoma is a visual aura that usually precedes a migraine. During this phenomenon, a mass of flickering or fluctuating light obscures normal vision.





-opsy to view

When cancer is possibly detected, doctors will usually perform a **biopsy** and remove a small portion of the area in question to evaluate.



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