



Prevalence (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevalence>) refers to the number of cases of an illness existing at a particular time.

Incidence ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incidence_\(epidemiology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incidence_(epidemiology))) refers to the number of new cases arising over a particular period, generally a year.

If the prevalence or incidence figures are divided by the number of individuals in the population, the result is a prevalence rate or incidence rate.

Prevalence and incidence may be understood using the analogy of a drum of water which has an in-flow pipe at the top and an out-flow pipe at the bottom.

Cases of the illness are like the molecules of water. The amount of water in the drum at a particular time corresponds to the prevalence, while the rate of flow into the drum is analogous to the incidence.

Recovery or remission corresponds to the rate of out-flow and duration of the illness to the length of time a molecule of water remains in the drum. The amount of water in the drum (the prevalence) can be reduced by either slowing down the in-flow (the incidence) or increasing the rate of out-flow (recovery/remission).