

Cavities within the Ventral Body Cavity

This illustration is designed to assist in making clear the location and function of cavities present within the **Ventral Body Cavity**. It is important to note that these cavities are **potential spaces** that contain only a **film** of lubricating fluid. Note also that the heart and the lungs are NOT in the cavities, but surrounded by the cavities. For a more accurate representation of the viscera / organs within these spaces, see your text.

If a cavity membrane is in intimate contact with the viscera / organs, it is said to be **visceral**. If the cavity membrane is against the outer cavity wall, the membrane is the **parietal portion**.

Hence, the visceral pleura will be in intimate contact with the lungs, while the parietal pleura will be in contact with the outer cavity wall associated with the lungs. Between the two pleural membranes is the pleura cavity in which is found the thin film of lubricating fluid that allows for frictionless ease of movement of the lungs within this space. The same is true for the heart.

Finally, organs surrounded by the peritoneal cavity are said to be **intraperitoneal**, while organs outside of the peritoneal cavity are said to be **retroperitoneal**.



