

**women's
health
&
fertility
terminology**

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A

Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

Bleeding difference in frequency, regularity, duration, or amount from normal uterine bleeding in the absence of pregnancy.

Abscess

When pus is collected and located in tissue or an organ.

Adhesion

This is when scars bind together on the surface of tissue.

Advanced Embryo Selection

A pre-implantation genetic diagnosis test that screens all chromosomes in a developing embryo allowing selection and fresh transfer of the embryo with the best chances of success.

Amenorrhea

This term references a lack of or end to menstrual periods.

Amniotic Sac

A sac in the mother's uterus that is filled with fluid where the fetus develops.

Androgens

Steroid hormones that are produced by the ovaries promoting characteristics that include significant facial hair and a deep voice.

Anovulation

Medical professionals use this word when a woman's ovaries stop producing or releasing eggs that are mature.

Antibiotic

Medication that treats certain types of infections.

Antibodies

Produced by the immune system, these are proteins located in the blood identify and neutralize foreign substances, such as bacteria and viruses that cause infection.

Anti-sperm Antibodies

Antibodies that block the movement or function of the sperm. These antibodies can develop in both males and females.

Assisted Hatching (AH)

The procedure in which the outer layer of the embryo (zona) is thinned by a laser to help the embryo implant easily.

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART)

The collective term for all fertility treatments.

Atrophy, vaginal – This is when the vaginal tissues shrink or thin due to a lack of estrogen following menopause, a condition that results in painful intercourse.

Anus

The opening of the alimentary canal on the outside of the body.

Assisted Vaginal Delivery

When the help of forceps or a vacuum device is used in a vaginal delivery.

B

Bacterial Vaginosis

An infection in the vagina that is caused by the overgrowth of a number of organisms that are normally found in the vagina.

Bartholin Gland

About the size of a pea, they are one of two small organs that are located just under the skin at the entrance to the vagina and produce some of the lubrication during sexual excitement.

Bartholin's cyst

This is a build-up of mucus or an infection in one of the major mucus producing glands close to the opening of the vagina. The condition causes swelling or pain and is usually treated with surgical draining.

Benign

This term refers to cell growth that medical specialists deem non-cancerous. Benign cell growth does not make its way into nearby tissue nor will it spread to other body parts.

Biopsy

A (minor) surgical procedure removing a small piece of tissue that's examined in a laboratory under a microscope.

Birth Control

A method in pregnancy prevention.

Bladder

The muscular organ that stores urine.

Blastocyst

The term for an embryo five days after fertilisation that has now developed a special shape, with different parts identifiable, and a fluid-filled cavity.

C

Caesarean Delivery

When surgical incisions are made in the mother's abdomen and uterus to deliver a baby.

Catheter

This is a tube that is used to drain urine or other fluids from the body.

Cells

With the ability to independently replicate these are the smallest units of a structure in the body, the building blocks for all parts of the body.

Cerclage

A cerclage is a round row of stitches set inside the cervix to stop dilation and ejection of a preterm fetus.

Cervical Cancer

Cancer in the cervix which is the opening to the uterus at the top of the vagina.

Cervical Ripening

When the cervix softens in preparation for labour.

Cervix

The narrow, lower end of the uterus that is located at the top of the vagina.

Chancre

A syphilis sore that appears at the place of infection.

Chlamydia

An STI caused by bacteria that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

Chromosomes

DNA molecule inside each cell in the body and contain the genes that determine a person's physical makeup.

Chronic Hypertension

When high blood pressure is diagnosed before a pregnancy.

Condom

A thin rubber sheath that is used to cover the penis during sexual intercourse to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.

Contraception

Birth control methods.

Corticosteroids

Typically, in possible premature birth cases; hormones given to assist with maturing fetal lungs, for arthritis, or for other medical conditions.

Cure

Medical specialists consider a cancer or other illness cured if, following treatment, it can no longer be detected and remains undetected for a long time. In many cases, this means that the cancer has not come back in five years or more.

Cysts

Fluid-filled sacs.

D

Deep Vein Thrombosis

When blood clot forms in veins in areas of the body.

Diabetes Mellitus

When the levels of sugar in the blood are too high.

Dilation and Curettage (D&C)

When the cervix is opened (or dilated) and tissue is lightly scraped (curettage) or suctioned from the inside of the uterus.

Disseminated Gonococcal Infection

An infection from a previous untreated infection with gonorrhoea and can be life-threatening. Symptoms you may experience will include chills, skin sores, fever or pain in the fingers, knees, or toes.

Donor Insemination

The use of sperm from a male donor in order to achieve a pregnancy.

Dysmenorrhea

When there is discomfort and pain during a menstrual period.

Dyspareunia

This condition is pain in the pelvis or vagina following intercourse.

Dysplasia

When dysplasia occurs, abnormal cells have been detected on the cervix or another area of the genitals. Dysplasia can progress into a cancer, one that is caused by the human papillomavirus.

Dysuria

When there is discomfort and pain during urination.

E

Eclampsia

Seizures that occur in pregnancy that is related to high blood pressure.

Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy is one that is developing outside of the uterus. In most cases, this type of pregnancy occurs in a fallopian tube.

Endometriosis

This is a condition involving tissue that resembles endometrium. It develops outside of the uterus. The tissue grows on or close to the fallopian tubes, ovaries or other parts of the pelvic region.

Estrogen

A set of hormones emitted by the ovaries. These hormones affect a women's menstrual cycle and sexual development.

Egg

The cell in the female reproductive system that is produced in and released from the ovaries.

Egg Collection

The stage of an IVF treatment cycle where the woman's eggs are collected under vaginal ultrasound.

Electrocautery

When a medical instrument works with electric current to destroy tissue.

Embryo

Once the egg has joined with the sperm it is called an embryo.

Embryo Scope

The Embryo Scope combines a state-of-the-art incubator, a high-resolution time-lapse camera and a computer with specialised software to expertly monitor embryo development. This new technology takes multiple images of each embryo approximately every seven minutes, allowing scientists to carefully monitor an embryo's development via the high-resolution time-lapse camera without removing the embryo from the incubator.

Embryo Transfer

The stage of an IVF treatment cycle where the embryo is transferred back to the woman's uterus via a fine catheter.

Emergency Contraception (EC)

Forms of contraception that are used after sexual intercourse and no preventative methods were used or defective methods. Typically, contraceptive pills administered within a specific time frame.

Endometrial Ablation

Procedure when the lining of the uterus is destroyed to stop or reduce menstrual bleeding.

Endometrial Biopsy

Procedure when a small amount of the tissue lining the uterus is removed and examined under a microscope.

Endometrial Cancer

When cancer is found in the lining of the uterus.

Endometriosis

When tissue that lines the uterus is found outside of the uterus. It is usually found on the fallopian tubes, ovaries, and other pelvic structures.

Endometrium

This is the lining of the uterus.

Episiotomy

This is when a surgical incision is made into the perineum (the region between the vagina and the anus) to expand the vaginal opening for delivery.

Estimated Due Date (EDD)

The estimated date that a baby will be born.

Estrogen

The primary female hormone that is produced in the ovaries. They stimulate the growth of the uterine lining.

F

Fallopian Tubes

The tubes that the egg (or ovum) travel in that go from the ovary to the uterus.

Fetal Growth Restriction

When a fetus's estimated weight is less than that of 9 out of 10 other fetuses of the same gestational age.

Fetus

The term used to describe the baby from conception to birth.

Fibroadenoma

A solid, benign breast mass.

Fibroid

A common term that refers to "leiomyoma," which is a uterine tumour that is benign. This type of tumour is formed from uterine muscle tissue. Fibroids can be painful, and they may cause heavy bleeding.

Follicle

The bag of fluid that surrounds the egg and which can usually be seen on the ultrasound scan.

Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH)

A hormone produced and released from the pituitary gland to stimulate the follicle and egg to grow.

Follicular Phase

The first half of a woman's ovarian cycle following menstruation and during which the follicles grow.

Forceps

A device that is placed around the baby's head to help with an assisted vaginal delivery.

G

Gamete

A word that describes both the male and female reproductive cells, i.e. the sperm and egg.

Gender Identity

A person's sense of themselves as a woman, a man, or other gendered.

General Anaesthesia

Medication used to produce a sleep-like state to prevent pain during surgery.

Genital Herpes

An STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) caused by a virus that produces painful, highly infectious sores on or around the sex organs. It is caused by the human papillomavirus.

Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause

Caused by decreased estrogen levels after menopause, symptoms include vaginal dryness, thinning of the lining of the vagina and urethra, and painful sexual intercourse.

Gestational Diabetes

When a woman without diabetes develops the condition during pregnancy.

Gestational Hypertension

High blood pressure occurring after the 20-week mark of pregnancy and is new-onset.

Glucose

A sugar that is present in the blood. This is the body's main source of fuel.

Gonadotropin-releasing Hormone (GnRH) Agonists

Medical therapy used to control and block the effects of certain hormones.

Gonorrhoea

An STI that may cause pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and arthritis.

H

HELLP Syndrome

A severe complication in pregnancy of high blood pressure.

Hormone Therapy

When estrogen and often progestin's are taken to help relieve some of the symptoms caused by low levels of these hormones.

Hormone

A substance made by cells or organs in the body that controls the function of cells or organs.

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG)

The hormone that is produced by the embryo and is measured in a pregnancy test. Injections of hCG can be used to trigger maturation of the egg followed by ovulation.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

A virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) by attacking certain cells of the body's immune system.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

A virus that can cause genital warts and is linked to cervical changes and cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, anus, mouth, and throat.

HyCoSy

An ultrasound procedure to test whether the fallopian tubes are blocked. It involves the injection of a dye through the cervix and into the uterus.

Hypertension

This is the term for high blood pressure.

Hyperplasia

When cells in the breast or lobes or ducts increase in number and look abnormal under a microscope.

Hypothalamus

An area of the brain that produces hormones that control body temperature, appetite and the release of hormones from the endocrine glands.

Hypothyroidism

When there is a lack in thyroid hormone in the thyroid gland.

Hysterectomy

A procedure when the uterus is completely removed.

Hysterosalpingogram

A procedure using a special X-ray in which a small amount of fluid is placed into the fallopian tubes and uterus to observe abnormal changes in their size and shape or to determine whether the tubes are blocked.

Hysteroscopic Sterilization

When the opening of each fallopian tube is blocked with scar tissue that is formed by the insertion of small implants, preventing sperm from entering the fallopian tubes to fertilize an egg.

Hysteroscopy

Using a device called a hysteroscope, it is inserted into the uterus through the cervix to observe the inside of the uterus or perform surgery.

I

ICSI (Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection)

The fertility technique where a single sperm is selected and directly injected into an egg.

Implantation

The embedding of the embryo in the lining of the uterus 6-7 days after fertilisation.

Intro-Uterine Insemination (IUI)

Treatment that involved inserting the partner's concentrated semen through the neck of the womb into the uterus itself close to the time of ovulation.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

When an egg is removed from a woman's ovary then it is fertilized in a laboratory with a man's sperm and finally transferred to the woman's uterus to achieve a pregnancy.

Incontinence

Uncontrolled leakage of urine, faeces, or gas.

Infertility

When a woman is infertile, she is unable to have children.

Inflammation

When someone experiences pain, swelling, redness, and irritation of tissues in the body.

Intrauterine device (IUD) or Intrauterine system (IUS)

A device that is small is inserted to the left inside of the uterus to prevent pregnancy.

Iron-Deficiency Anaemia

When the level of the body's iron is abnormally low.

K

Kick Count

This is when the number of times a fetus moves within a certain period is logged.

Kidneys

Two organs that regulate the balance of fluid in the body, cleans the blood and removes liquid waste.

L

Labia Majora

The larger outer area of the external female genitalia.

Labia Minora

The smaller inner area of the external female genitalia.

Laparoscope

An instrument used to perform surgeries. The instrument is inserted into the abdominal cavity through a small incision to view internal organs.

Laparoscopy

The purpose of this procedure is to be able to view the pelvic organs, an instrument called a laparoscope (or sometimes other instruments) is inserted into the pelvic cavity through a small incision.

Liver Enzymes

These are chemicals that are made by liver cells. If elevated levels are present, it may indicate liver damage.

Local Anaesthesia

Medication used to prevent pain in a part of the body during a procedure.

Lupus

An inflammatory disorder that causes changes in the joints, skin, kidneys, lungs, heart, or brain.

Luteal Phase

The last 14 days of a menstrual cycle after ovulation.

Luteinising Hormone (LH)

A hormone produced and released by the pituitary gland. It is responsible for triggering ovulation.

Lymph nodes

These are small organs that store bacteria trapping cells. Lymph node clusters are located in the groin, underarms, neck, abdomen and chest.

M

Macrosomia

When a fetus's weight is estimated to be between 4000 grams and 4500 grams.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

By using magnetic fields and radio waves, an MRI can produce images of internal organs and structures.

Mammography

An imaging technique to detect breast cancer using X-rays of the breast. The image produced is referred to as a mammogram.

Mastitis

When there is an infection of the breast tissue. This is common during breast feeding.

Meconium

A beginning stool of a fetus that builds up in the bowels of said fetus.

Meningitis

When the membranes of the brain or spinal cord are inflamed.

Menopause

When a woman's ovaries stop releasing eggs and stop producing estrogen and progesterone which results in their inability to become pregnant.

Menses

This is the menstrual flow.

Menstrual Cycle

A menstrual cycle is defined as the first day of menstrual bleeding of one cycle to the first day of menstrual bleeding of the next cycle.

Minilaparotomy

A sterilisation procedure when a small abdominal incision is made on the fallopian tubes to be closed off.

Miscarriage

When a pregnancy is lost during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Morphology

A 19-20 week pregnancy scan that usually shows good views of the limbs as well as the internal organs. It detects the fetal heartbeat, multiple pregnancies, checks amniotic fluid and fetal abnormalities.

Myomectomy

A myomectomy is an operation to remove fibroids while preserving the uterus.

N

Neurologic

When a condition is related to the nervous system.

Noninvasive prenatal testing (NIPT)

A method of determining the risk that the fetus will be born with certain genetic abnormalities.

Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs

Medication that relieves pain by reducing inflammation; most are available to purchase over the counter.

Nuchal Translucency Test (NT)

This is a specialised routine ultrasound performed between week 11 and week 13 of pregnancy. Fetuses with increased fluid at the base of their necks, known as the nuchal fold, may have a chromosomal problem such as Down syndrome.

Nutrients

A nourishing substance supplied through food, such as vitamins and minerals.

O

Obstetrician–Gynaecologist (Ob-Gyn)

A women's physician that has special skills, training, and education.

Obstetrician

A physician who specializes in care for women during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period.

Oestrogen

The primary female hormone produced mainly from the ovary from puberty until menopause.

Oocyte

The fully mature egg produced from the ovary each month.

Osteoporosis

When bones become so fragile that they break more easily.

Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS)

The condition where women over respond to the fertility drugs and can develop severe fluid retention and abdominal swelling.

Ovaries

Located in the lower abdomen, within the female reproductive system there are a pair of organs that contain the eggs released at ovulation and produce hormones.

Ovulation

The process when an egg is released from one of the ovaries.

Ovulation Induction

Medication used to stimulate growth and release of the eggs. This may be used in combination with Intra-Uterine Insemination.

Oxygen

A chemical element that is necessary to sustain life.

Oxytocin

A medication that can be used to help cause or strengthen labour contractions. It can also be used to control post-birth bleeding and induce an abortion.

P

Pap Smear/Test

An examination of the cervix and vagina with an extraction of cells to observe under a microscope.

Partner Notification

This is when someone identifies and informs sexual partners that they have a sexually transmitted infection so that they can be tested.

Pelvic Exam

An examination of a woman's reproductive organs that include the vagina, vulva, cervix, uterus, ovaries rectum and pelvis.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

When there is an infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes, and nearby pelvic structures.

Perimenopause

The period of a woman's life that precedes menopause. This usually extends from age 45 years to 55 years.

Perineal Tear

Typically, during childbirth, a tear of the skin or other soft tissues that separate the vagina from the anus.

Perineum

The surface area between the vagina (or scrotum) and the anus.

PICSI

This is a process used to collect sperm for ICSI. The selection of sperm is based upon those that are able to bind to a hyaluronic hydrogel, mimicking the natural binding of mature sperm to eggs.

Pituitary Gland

The gland located at the base of the brain, which controls most hormone functions.

Placenta

An organ that connects the fetus to the uterus during pregnancy. It provides nourishment to and takes waste away from the fetus.

Placental Abruption

When the placenta separates from the uterine lining before the baby is born.

Platelets

Disc-shaped cells that help with clumping and clotting that help the blood to clot.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

A hormonal condition with the possibility of cysts being present on the ovaries. It is related to infertility issues because the failure to release eggs regularly.

Polyyps

Growths (typically non-cancerous) that develop and attach to the lining on the inside of the uterus.

Postmaturity Syndrome

When a post term fetus is born with a long and lean body, a lot of scalp hair, long fingernails, and thin wrinkled skin.

Postpartum Haemorrhage

When heavy bleeding is experienced after delivery of a baby and placenta.

Postpartum Sterilization

A procedure when the fallopian tubes are cut or blocked, which prevents pregnancy by blocking the egg's path to the sperm and uterus. When done post-partum, depending on the type of delivery, it is done a few hours or days after the birth.

Preeclampsia

A disorder during pregnancy or after childbirth that causes high blood pressure, swelling of appendages and protein found in the urine.

Pre-implantation Genetic Testing (PGT)

Testing the genetic makeup of the embryo before it is transferred back into the woman.

Pregnancy-associated plasma protein A (PAPP-A)

A protein produced first by the growing placenta. During a normal pregnancy, levels of this protein increase in the pregnant woman's blood until delivery.

Prenatal Care

The healthcare received during pregnancy.

Preterm

Any time a baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Prodrome

Early symptoms indicating the dawning of disease or illness.

Progesterone

Hormone produced in the ovaries and that prepares the lining of the uterus for pregnancy.

Progestin

A manufactured form of progesterone that is similar to the hormone produced naturally by the body.

Proliferative Without Atypia

An excess in growth of normal looking cells.

Proteinuria

Often a sign of kidney disease, this is the presence of an abnormal amount of protein in the urine.

Puberty

When the reproductive organs become functional and secondary sex characteristics develop.

R

Rectum

The very end portion of the digestive tract.

Recurrent Infections

Reoccurring infections, usually within a short time, but may also be spread out over several months.

Regional Anaesthesia

Medication that blocks sensation in certain areas of the body.

Resectoscope

A type of endoscope used in surgeries of the uterus, prostate, bladder, or urethra. The device may be used to extract tissue for biopsy, remove growths, or ablate diseased or damaged tissue.

S

Screening Test

Done to test for diseases or health conditions when symptoms are not present.

Scrotum

The external structure on a male containing the testicles.

Semen

Organic fluid made up of sperm produced by the male.

Sexual Intercourse

Typically, with heterosexuals that involve penetration of the vagina by the penis.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Infections from sexual contact. STI's include gonorrhoea, HPV, herpes, chlamydia, syphilis, and HIV.

Sonohysterogram

This examination is when sterile fluid is inserted into the uterus using a tube.

Speculum

A device that is used to hold open the walls of the vagina.

Sperm

A male produced cell in the testes that can fertilize a female egg.

Spermatozoa

Also known as sperm.

Spermicides

Creams, gels or foams that inactivate sperm.

Spontaneous Vaginal Delivery

A vaginal birth without assistance from devices such as, forceps or a vacuum.

Sterilisation

A method of birth control that is considered permanent and irreversible.

T

Testes

A pair of male organs that produce sperm and the male sex hormone testosterone.

Thrombophilia

Occurs when blood does not clot correctly.

Tranexamic Acid

Medication used to treat or prevent heavy bleeding.

Transvaginal Ultrasound

Using a device called a transducer, an ultrasound performed that produces sound waves by bouncing off body tissue.

Trimester

Describing the divided 3-month terms in a pregnancy.

U

Ultrasonography

In Obstetrics, this is a test in which sound waves are used to examine a fetus.

Umbilical Cord

A flexible cord-like structure that contains blood vessels that connect the placenta to the fetus.

Ureters

The duct leading from one of the kidneys to the bladder.

Urethra

A tube-like structure that urine flows from the bladder to the outside of the body.

Uterine Artery Embolization (UAE)

A procedure to treat fibroids by blocking blood vessels with small particles to cut off the blood supply to the uterine body.

Uterus

Located in the female pelvic, a muscular organ that contains and nourishes a developing fetus during pregnancy. Also known as the womb.

Ultrasound

A modified form of radar used to see the follicles in the ovary and pregnancy in the uterus. This may be done either through the abdomen or through the vagina.

V

Vacuum Device

A metal or plastic cup that is applied to the fetus' head with suction to assist delivery.

Vagina

A flexible, elastic tube-like structure surrounded by muscles leading from the uterus to the outside of the body.

Vaginal Atrophy

This is when the vaginal tissues shrink or thin due to a lack of estrogen following menopause, a condition that results in painful intercourse.

Vas Deferens

The duct that carries sperm from each male testis to the prostate gland.

Vasectomy

A method of permanent male sterilization when a part of the vas deferens is removed.

Vestibule

The opening or entrance of the vaginal canal.

Vulva

The external area of female genitalia.

Vulvodynia

Unexplained, chronic vulva pain that is not caused by a skin disease or infection.

X

Xenoestrogens

Xenoestrogens are a sub-category of the endocrine disruptor group that specifically have estrogen-like effects. Build-up of xenoestrogens have been indicated in many conditions including breast cancer, obesity, infertility, endometriosis, early onset puberty, miscarriages, and diabetes.

Y

Yeast Infection

When an overgrowth of the fungus *Candida* happens around the vagina and vulva.