



Glossary

Andrology

The study of male reproduction.

Anovulatory Bleeding

The type of menstruation often associated with failure to ovulate – may be scanty and of short duration or abnormally heavy and in irregular patterns.

Artificial Insemination

A procedure by which a sperm from the male partner is prepared and placed either in the cervix or high in the uterus of the female partner.

Azoospermia

No sperm at all.

Basal Body Temperature

The woman's temperature, taken first thing in the morning, is used to help determine ovulation.

Bicornuate Uterus

A malformation of the uterus where the upper portion is duplicated.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Your weight in kilograms divided by your height in metres and then squared. A normal BMI is between 20 and 25.

Cervical Mucus

A viscous fluid plugging the opening of the cervix. Most of the time this thick mucus plug prevents sperm and bacteria from entering the uterus. However, at mid cycle, under the influence of estrogen, the mucus becomes thin, watery, and stringy to allow sperm to pass into the uterus.

Clomiphene Citrate

A synthetic drug used to stimulate the hypothalamus and pituitary gland to increase FSH and LH production.

Corpus Luteum

The special “cyst” that forms in the ovary at the site of the released egg. This “cyst” produces the hormone progesterone during the second half of the normal menstrual cycle.

Cryopreservation

A procedure used to preserve and store embryos or gametes (sperm, oocytes) by freezing them.

Dysmenorrhoea

Painful menstruation.

Ectopic Pregnancy

The development of a fertilized egg outside the uterus; embryos may migrate into the fallopian tube and lodge there rather than returning to the uterine cavity for normal development.

Egg Retrieval

A procedure used to obtain eggs from ovarian follicles for use in in vitro fertilization. This procedure is performed using ultrasound guidance to drain the ovarian follicles through the vagina.

Embryo

The term used to describe the early stages of fetal growth, from conception to the eight week of pregnancy.

Embryo Transfer

Introduction of an embryo into a woman’s uterus.

Endometriosis

The presence of endometrial tissue (normal uterine lining) in abnormal locations such as the tubes, ovaries and peritoneal cavity, often causing infertility and painful menstruation.

Endometrium

The lining (endometrial tissue) that builds up inside the uterus.

Epididymis

The coiled tube attached to the back and upper side of the testicle that stores sperm and is connected to the vas deferens.

Estradiol

A hormone released by developing follicles in the ovary. Plasma estradiol levels are used to help determine progressive growth of the follicle during ovulation induction.

Estrogen

A class of hormones produced mainly by the ovaries from the onset of puberty and continuing until menopause and which are responsible for the development of secondary sexual characteristics.

Fallopian Tubes

A pair of narrow tubes that carry the ovum (egg) from the ovary to the uterus.

Fertility Treatment

Any method or procedure used to enhance fertility or increase the likelihood of pregnancy. The goal of fertility treatment is to help couples have a child.

Fertilization

The penetration of the egg by the sperm and fusion of genetic materials to result in the development of the embryo.

Fibroid Tumour

A benign tumour of fibrous tissue that may occur in the uterine wall; may be totally without symptoms or may cause abnormal menstrual patterns

Follicles

Fluid-filled sacs in the ovary which contain the eggs released at ovulation. Each month an egg develops inside the ovary in a fluid-filled pocket called a follicle.

Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH)

At the beginning of each menstrual cycle the ovaries receive a hormonal signal that stimulates the follicles to grow and develop.

Gland

Hormone-producing organ.

Gonadotropin

A hormone capable of stimulating the testicles or the ovaries to produce sperm or eggs: Follicle Stimulating Hormone and Lutenizing Hormone.

Hormone

A chemical, produced by an endocrine gland, which circulates in the blood and has widespread action throughout the body.

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG)

A hormone secreted by the placenta during pregnancy that prolongs the life of the corpus luteum, progesterone production and thus preserves the pregnancy; this hormone accounts for pregnancy tests being positive; it may also be administered therapeutically to induce ovulation.

Human Menopausal Gonadotropins (hMG)

Are a good source of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and lutenizing hormone (LH) which are excreted in the urine of a menopausal woman and then distilled, filtered and purified; is administered by intramuscular injection.

Hyperstimulation Syndrome

A syndrome that may include ovarian enlargement, gastrointestinal symptoms, abdominal distension secondary to fluid accumulation and weight gain. Severe cases may be further complicated with cardiovascular, pulmonary and electrolyte disturbances, requiring hospitalization.

Hypogonadotropic Hypogonadism

A state of complete failure to produce gonadotropins that can be brought about by surgery or radiotherapy for a pituitary tumour, certain medical conditions and is found in some women who are severely underweight such as some female marathon runners.

Hypothalamus

The part of the central nervous system (central area on the underside of the brain) that communicates with the pituitary gland to control involuntary functions such as body temperature and the release of hormones.

Idiopathic Infertility

The term used to describe unexplained infertility.

Implantation

The embedding of the fertilized egg in the endometrium of the uterus.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

A procedure in which several eggs are retrieved from the ovary, fertilized in the laboratory with sperm from the male partner, and a small selection of the resulting embryos are then transferred to the uterus for transplantation.

Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI)

A micromanipulation procedure where a single sperm is injected into an egg to enable fertilization. This procedure is used in cases where the male partner has very low sperm counts, non-motile sperm, poor sperm morphology (shape) or is unable to ejaculate and therefore cannot either have intercourse or produce a semen sample.

Infertility

For women under the age of 35 the inability to conceive after repeated intercourse without contraception for one year. Women 35 or older should talk to their doctor if they have not been able to conceive after a period of six months or longer.

Luteal Phase

The days of the menstrual cycle following ovulation and ending with menses during which progesterone is produced.

Luteal Phase Defect

A shortened luteal phase or one with inadequate progesterone production.

Luteinizing Hormone (LH)

A pituitary hormone that stimulates the gonads. Throughout the menstrual cycle; secretion of LH increases in the middle of the cycle to induce release of the egg.

Oligospermia

Too few sperm.

Ovarian Cyst

A fluid-filled sac inside the ovary. An ovarian cyst may be found in conjunction with ovulation disorders, tumors of the ovary, and endometriosis.

Ovarian Failure

The inability of the ovary to respond to any gonadotropic hormone stimulation, usually due to the absence of follicular tissue on a genetic basis or the postmenopausal condition. Diagnosed by elevated FSH in the blood.

Ovaries

The sexual gland of the female which produces the hormones estrogen and progesterone and in which the ova are developed; there are two ovaries, one on each side of the pelvis and they are connected to the uterus by the fallopian tubes.

Ovulation

The discharge of a ripened egg, usually at about the midpoint of the menstrual cycle.

Ovulation Induction

Medical treatment performed to initiate ovulation.

Ovulatory Failure (Anovulation)

The failure to ovulate.

Ovum

The eggs produced in the ovaries each month.

Pituitary

A gland located at the base of the brain that secretes a number of important hormones related to normal growth and development of fertility.

Placenta

The embryonic tissue that invades the uterine wall and provides a mechanism for exchanging the baby's waste products for the mother's nutrients and oxygen. The baby is connected to the placenta by the umbilical cord.

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD)

Screening of cells from preimplantation embryos for the detection of genetic and/or chromosomal disorders before embryo transfer.

Premature Ovarian Failure

A condition where the ovary runs out of follicles before the normal age associated with menopause.

Progesterone

A hormone secreted by the corpus luteum of the ovary after ovulation has occurred; also produced by the placenta during pregnancy. It thickens the lining of the uterus to prepare it to accept implantation of a fertilized egg.

Recurrent Miscarriage

Recurrent miscarriage is defined as the loss of three or more pregnancies. There are many possible causes of recurrent miscarriage which may be working together or individually to cause the miscarriages.

Resistant Ovary

An ovary that cannot respond to the follicle-stimulating message sent by FSH. Primitive germ cells will be present in the ovary; however, they will not respond to FSH stimulation.

Secondary Infertility

The inability of a couple which has successfully achieved pregnancy to achieve another. This strict medical definition includes couples for whom the pregnancy did not go to term. The common usage, however, refers to a couple which has one biological child but is unable to conceive another.

Septate Uterus

A septum divides the uterus into two chambers.

Semen

The fluid portion of the ejaculate consisting of secretions from the seminal vesicles, prostate gland, and several other glands in the male reproductive tract. The semen provides nourishment and protection for the sperm and a medium in which the sperm can travel to the woman's vagina. Semen may also refer to the entire ejaculate, including the sperm.

Semen Analysis

A laboratory test used to assess semen quality: sperm quantity, concentration, morphology (form), and motility. In addition, it measures semen (fluid) volume and whether or not white blood cells are present, indicating an infection.

Sperm Morphology

A semen analysis factor that indicates the number or percentage of sperm in the sample that appear to have been formed normally.

Sperm Motility

The ability of sperm to swim. Poor motility means the sperm may have a difficult time swimming toward their goal, the egg.

Superovulation

Stimulation with injectable fertility medication (gonadotropins) in order to cause the release of multiple eggs during ovulation; also referred to as controlled ovarian hyperstimulation (COH).

Surrogate Mother

A woman who agrees to carry a pregnancy for another couple who will ultimately raise the child as the intended parent(s).

Ultrasound

A test used to visualize the reproductive organs; for example, to monitor follicular development and to examine the tubes and uterus. The instrument works by bouncing sound waves off the organs. A picture displayed on a TV screen shows the internal organs.

Uterine polyps

Small benign growths in the lining of the uterus that can interfere with implantation of an embryo.

Uterine fibroids

Muscular growths in the wall of the uterus that may push into the uterine cavity and interfere with implantation.

Varicose

Enlarged veins.

Varicoceles

Varicose (enlarged) veins around the testicles.

Zona pellucida

The outermost and toughest coating around the egg.

Zygote

An ovum that has been fertilized by a sperm.