

FALCON HEALTH CENTER WOMEN'S HEALTH GLOSSARY

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN THE MEANINGS BEHIND THESE WORDS FOR YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH AND TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE WORDS BEING USED DURING YOUR APPOINTMENTS AT THE FALCON HEALTH CENTER.

FEEL FREE TO PRINT THIS BOOKLET FOR YOUR PERSONAL USE.

A

Abstinence: having no vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It is the only method that is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy and STI's.

Amniotic Fluid: clear, slightly yellowish liquid that circulates around the unborn baby during pregnancy. It is contained in the amniotic sac.

Amniotic Sac: the sac that is formed within the uterus during pregnancy to house the fetus and amniotic fluid.

Anovulation: a menstrual cycle where the ovaries do not release an egg.

Areola: the pigmented area on the breast that surrounds the nipple.

B

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV): the most common vaginal infection in women of childbearing age, which happens when the normal bacteria (germs) in the vagina get out of balance, such as from douching or from sexual contact. Symptoms include vaginal discharge that can be white, gray or thin and have an odor; burning or pain when urinating; or itching around the outside of the vagina. There also may be no symptoms.

Benign: noncancerous

C

Candida: a fungus, called *Candida albicans*, that causes yeast infections like thrush in the mouth and throat, and in intestines and other parts of the body.

Cervical Cancer: cancer that forms in the cervix. This cancer normally takes several years to happen, but it can also happen in a very short amount of time. Before the cells turn into cancer, abnormal cells develop on the cervix that can be found by a Pap test. Women generally don't have symptoms of cervical cancer. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), a group of viruses, can cause abnormal changes on the cervix that can lead to cervical cancer.

C

Cervix: the lower, narrow part of the uterus that joins with the vagina.

Cesarean (C-section): a surgical procedure where the baby is delivered through incisions made through the abdomen and uterus.

Clitoris: an external female sex organ located near the top of the inner labia of the vagina. The clitoris is the most sensitive and primary erogenous zone.

Colposcopy: procedure that uses a special microscope (called a colposcope) to look into the vagina and to look very closely at the cervix.

Contraception: prevention of pregnancy.

E

Embryo: a multi cellular eukaryote in the early stages of development. It is considered a fetus for the first eight weeks after fertilization. After week eight it is referred to as a fetus.

Ectopic Pregnancy: a pregnancy where a fertilized egg settles and grows in a place other than the inner lining of the uterus. Most happen in the fallopian tube, but can happen in the ovary, cervix, or abdominal cavity.

Endometrial Cancer: cancer that develops from the endometrium, or the tissue lining of the uterus.

Endometriosis: a condition in which tissue that normally lines the uterus grows in other areas of the body, but acts as if it were inside the uterus. Blood that is shed monthly from the misplaced tissue has no place to go except the body cavity. Symptoms include painful menstrual cramps that can be felt in the abdomen or lower back, or pain during or after sexual activity, irregular bleeding, and infertility.

Engorgement: condition in which breasts become overly full of milk. Engorged breasts may feel swollen, hard, and painful.

Epidural: an epidural is the most common form of pain relief during labor. A woman may be offered an epidural, where a needle is inserted into the epidural space at the end of the spine, to numb the lower body and reduce pain. This allows a woman to have more energy and strength for the end stage of labor.

Estrogen: a group of female hormones that are responsible for the development of breasts and other secondary sex characteristics in women. Estrogen is produced by the ovaries and other body tissues. Estrogen, along with progesterone, is important in preparing a woman's body for pregnancy.

F

Fallopian Tubes: part of the female reproductive system, these tubes carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus (or womb).

F

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD): a term used to describe the full range of harmful effects that can occur when a fetus is exposed to alcohol.

Follicle: each month, an egg develops inside the ovary in a fluid filled pocket called a follicle. This follicle releases the egg into the fallopian tube.

Follicle-Stimulating Hormone (FSH): a hormone produced by the pituitary gland. In women, it helps control the menstrual cycle and the production of eggs by the ovaries.

G

Gynecology: study of diseases and issue pertinent to women.

H

Hormone: substance produced by one tissue and conveyed by the bloodstream to another to effect a function of the body, such as growth or metabolism.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): replaces the hormones that a woman's ovaries stop making at the time of menopause, easing symptoms like hot flashes and vaginal dryness. HRT combines the female hormones estrogen and progesterone and is usually given in pill form. (A recent study has found that HRT can cause more harm than good in healthy women, and can increase a woman's risk for breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, and pulmonary embolism (blood clot in the lung). Talk with your health care provider to find out if HRT is best for you and about other ways to control menopause symptoms.)

Hysterectomy: surgery to remove the uterus.

I

Infertility: a condition in which a couple has problems conceiving, or getting pregnant, after one year of regular sexual intercourse without using any birth control methods. Infertility can be caused by a problem with the man or the woman, or both.

L

Labia Majora: a part of the female external genitalia, consists of folds of tissue that lie on either side of the vaginal opening and form the border of the vulva.

L

Labia Minora: a part of the female external genitalia, consists of thin layer of skin that lies between the vaginal opening and the labia majora.

Lactation: breast feeding, or the secretion of breast milk.

Lactiferous Sinuses: enlarged portion of the mammary or milk duct where breast milk pools during breast feeding. The sinuses are behind the areola and connect to the nipple.

Luteinizing Hormone: a hormone that triggers ovulation and stimulates the corpus luteum (empty follicle) to make progesterone.

M

Malignant: cancerous

Mammary Ducts: ducts in the breast that carry milk to the lactiferous sinuses and the nipple.

Menopause: the transition in a woman's life when production of the hormone estrogen in her body falls permanently to very low levels, the ovaries stop producing eggs, and menstrual periods stop for good.

Menstrual Cycle: a recurring cycle in which the lining of the uterus thickens in preparation for pregnancy and then is shed if pregnancy does not occur.

Menstrual Flow: flow of bloody fluid from the vagina resulting from the uterus shedding its lining.

Menstruating: The blood flow from the uterus that happens about every 4 weeks in a woman.

Miscarriage: an unplanned loss of a pregnancy. Also called a spontaneous abortion.

N

Nexplanon: hormone-releasing birth control implant placed in the inner, upper arm under the skin for women who prefer a long-acting option. Nexplanon is a soft flexible implant used for up to 3 years of continuous pregnancy prevention.

Nipple: the protruding part of the breast that extends and becomes firmer upon stimulation. In breast feeding, milk travels from the milk sinuses through the nipple to the baby.

O

Obstetrics: the branch of medicine that deals with the care of women during pregnancy and childbirth.

O

Osteoporosis: a bone disease that is characterized by progressive loss of bone density and thinning of bone tissue, causing bones to break easily.

Ovarian Cancer: cancer of the ovary or ovaries, which are organs in the female reproductive system that make eggs and hormones.

Ovarian Reserve: health of the ovaries and eggs. It is an important factor in female fertility and decreases with age. Covers the outer surface of the ovary, called epithelial cells.

Ovaries: part of a woman's reproductive system, the ovaries produce her eggs. Each month, through the process called ovulation, the ovaries release eggs into the fallopian tubes, where they travel to the uterus, or womb. If an egg is fertilized by a man's sperm, a woman becomes pregnant and the egg grows and develops inside the uterus. If the egg is not fertilized, the egg and the lining of the uterus is shed during a woman's monthly menstrual period.

Ovulation: the release of a single egg from a follicle that developed in the ovary. It usually occurs regularly, around day 14 of a 28-day menstrual cycle.

Ovulation Method: a method used by couples trying to get pregnant, in which they have intercourse just before or after ovulation.

Oxytocin: a hormone that increases during pregnancy and acts on the breast to help produce the milk-ejection reflex. Oxytocin also causes uterine contractions.

P

Pap test: this test finds changes on the cervix. To do a Pap test, the doctor uses a small brush to take cells from the cervix.

Pelvic Exam: during this exam, the doctor or nurse practitioner looks for redness, swelling, discharge, or sores on the outside and inside of the vagina. A Pap test tests for cell changes on the cervix. The doctor or nurse practitioner will also put two fingers inside the vagina and press on the abdomen with the other hand to check for cysts or growths on the ovaries and uterus. STD tests may also be done.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID): an infection of the female reproductive organs that are above the cervix, such as the fallopian tubes and ovaries. It is the most common and serious problem caused by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). PID can cause ectopic pregnancies, infertility, chronic pelvic pain, and other serious problems. Symptoms include fever, foul-smelling vaginal discharge, extreme pain, and vaginal bleeding.

Perinatal Depression: depression that occurs during pregnancy or within a year after delivery.

Peripartum Depression: depression after pregnancy.

Pituitary Gland: a small gland in the head that makes hormones that control other glands and many body functions including growth.

Placenta: During pregnancy, a temporary organ joining the mother and fetus. The placenta transfers oxygen and nutrients from the mother to the fetus, and permits the release of carbon dioxide and waste products from the fetus. The placenta is expelled during the birth process with the fetal membranes.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): a health problem that can affect a woman's menstrual cycle, ability to have children, hormones, heart, blood vessels, and appearance. With PCOS, women typically have high levels of androgens or male hormones, missed or irregular periods, and many small cysts in their ovaries.

Postpartum Depression (PPD): a serious condition that requires treatment from a health care provider. With this condition, feelings of the baby blues (feeling sad, anxious, afraid, or confused after having a baby) do not go away or get worse.

Pre-term Labor: labor that occurs before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

Preeclampsia: a female hormone produced by the ovaries. Progesterone, along with estrogen, prepares the uterus (womb) for a possible pregnancy each month and supports the fertilized egg if conception occurs. Progesterone also helps prepare the breasts for milk production and breast feeding.

Progesterone: Also known as Toxemia, it is a condition that can occur in a woman in the second half of her pregnancy that can cause serious problems for both her and the baby. It causes high blood pressure, protein in the urine, blood changes and other problems.

Progestin: a hormone that works by causing changes in the uterus. When taken with the hormone estrogen, progestin works to prevent thickening of the lining of the uterus. This is helpful for women who are in menopause and are taking estrogen for their symptoms. Progestins also are prescribed to regulate the menstrual cycle, treat unusual stopping of the menstrual periods, help a pregnancy occur or maintain a pregnancy, or treat unusual or heavy bleeding of the uterus. They also can be used to prevent pregnancy, help treat cancer of the breast, kidney, or uterus, and help treat loss of appetite and severe weight or muscle loss.

Prolactin: a hormone that increases during pregnancy and breastfeeding. It stimulates the human breast to produce milk. Prolactin also helps inhibit ovulation.

R

Remission: a period of time without symptoms of a chronic condition.

S

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI): an infection passed from person to person through intimate sexual contact. STIs are also called sexually transmitted diseases, or STDs.

Stillbirth: when a fetus dies during birth, or when the fetus dies during the late stages of pregnancy when it would have been otherwise expected to survive.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): the diagnosis given for the sudden death of an infant under one year of age that remains unexplained after a complete investigation. Because most cases of SIDS occur when a baby is sleeping in a crib, SIDS is also commonly known as crib death. Most SIDS deaths occur when a baby is between 1 and 4 months of age.

Symptothermal Method: a method of pregnancy planning or birth control that combines certain aspects of the calendar, the basal body temperature, and the cervical mucus methods. It takes into account all these factors as well as other symptoms a woman might have, such as slight cramping and breast tenderness.

T

Trimester: A typical pregnancy is 9 months long. Pregnancy is divided into three time periods, or trimesters, that are each about three months in duration — the first, second, and third trimesters.

Tumor: an abnormal mass of tissue that results when cells divide more than they should or do not die when they should. Tumors can be benign or malignant. Benign tumors are not cancer. Malignant tumors are cancer.

U

Ultrasound: a painless, harmless test that uses sound waves to produce images of the organs and structures of the body on a screen. Also called sonography.

Umbilical Cord: connected to the placenta and provides the transfer of nutrients and waste between the woman and the fetus.

Urethra: the tube that releases urine from the body.

U

Urinary Tract Infection: an infection anywhere in the urinary tract, or organs that collect and store urine and release it from your body (the kidneys, uterus, bladder, and urethra). An infection occurs when microorganisms, usually bacteria from the digestive tract, cling to the urethra (opening to the urinary tract) and begin to multiply.

Uterine Contractions: During the birthing process, a woman's uterus tightens, or contracts. Contractions can be strong and regular (meaning that they can happen every 5 minutes, every 3 minutes, and so on) during labor until the baby is delivered. Women can have contractions before labor starts; these are not regular and do not progress, or increase in intensity or duration.

Uterine Fibroids: common, benign (noncancerous) tumors that grow in the muscle of the uterus, or womb. Fibroids often cause no symptoms and need no treatment, and they usually shrink after menopause. But sometimes fibroids cause heavy bleeding or pain, and require treatment.

Uterus: a woman's womb, or the hollow, pear-shaped organ located in a woman's lower abdomen between the bladder and the rectum.

V

Vagina: The muscular canal that extends from the cervix to the outside of the body. Its walls are lined with mucus membranes and tiny glands that make vaginal secretions.

Vaginitis: Inflammation of the vagina, often caused by infection. Symptoms can include vaginal itching, burning, pain, and discharge.

Vulva: opening to the vagina.

Y

Yeast Infections: a common infection in women caused by an overgrowth of the fungus *Candida*. It is normal to have some yeast in your vagina, but sometimes it can overgrow because of hormonal changes in your body, such as during pregnancy, or from taking certain medications, such as antibiotics. Symptoms include itching, burning, and irritation of the vagina; pain when urinating or with intercourse; and cottage cheese-looking vaginal discharge.