

# Glossary

**abscess** A pocket of **pus** surrounded by inflammation, caused by a bacterial infection and marked by persistent pain.

**acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)** The condition, due to infection with **human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)**, when the body's immune system breaks down and is unable to fight certain infections.

**AIDS** See **acquired immune deficiency syndrome**.

**amenorrhea** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**anaphylactic shock** See Severe allergic reaction to latex, Appendix B, p. 321.

**anemia** A condition in which the body lacks adequate **hemoglobin**, commonly due to iron deficiency or excessive blood loss. As a result, tissues do not receive adequate oxygen.

**antiretroviral (ARV) therapy** A group of drugs used to treat people with **acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)**. There are several ARV classes, which work against HIV in different ways. Patients may take a combination of several drugs at once.

**atrial fibrillation** A heart rhythm disorder in which the upper heart chambers contract in an abnormal or disorganized manner.

**aura** See **migraine aura**.

**backup method** A contraceptive method used when mistakes are made with using an ongoing method of contraception, or to help ensure that a woman does not become pregnant when she first starts to use a contraceptive method. Include abstinence, male or female condoms, spermicides, and withdrawal.

**bacterial endocarditis** Infection that occurs when bacteria from the bloodstream colonize damaged heart tissue or valves.

**bacterial vaginosis** A common condition caused by overgrowth of bacteria normally found in the **vagina**. Not a sexually transmitted infection.

**balanitis** Inflammation of the tip of the **penis**.

**benign breast disease** Growth of abnormal but noncancerous breast tissue.

**benign ovarian tumor** Noncancerous growth that develops on or in the ovary.

**blood pressure** The force of the blood against the walls of blood vessels. Generally, normal systolic (pumping) blood pressure is less than 140 mm Hg, and normal diastolic (resting) blood pressure is less than 90 mm Hg (see **hypertension**).

**bone density** A measure of how dense and strong a bone is. When old bone breaks down faster than new bone tissue is formed, bones become less dense, increasing risk of fractures.

**breakthrough bleeding** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**breast cancer** Malignant (cancerous) growth that develops in breast tissue.

**breastfeeding** Feeding an infant with milk produced by the breasts (see also Lactational Amenorrhea Method, p. 257). Breastfeeding patterns include:

**exclusive breastfeeding** Giving the infant only breast milk with no supplementation of any type—not even water—except for perhaps vitamins, minerals, or medication.

**fully breastfeeding** Giving the infant breast milk almost exclusively but also water, juice, vitamins, or other nutrients infrequently.

**nearly fully breastfeeding** Giving the infant some liquid or food in addition to breast milk, but more than three-fourths of feedings are breastfeeds.

**partially breastfeeding** Any breastfeeding less than nearly fully breastfeeding, giving the infant more supplementation with other liquids or food. Less than three-fourths of feedings are breastfeeds.

**candidiasis** A common vaginal infection caused by a yeast-like fungus. Also known as yeast infection or thrush. Not a sexually transmitted infection.

**cardiovascular disease** Any disease of the heart, blood vessels, or blood circulation.

**cerebrovascular disease** Any disease of the blood vessels of the brain.

**cervical cancer** Malignant (cancerous) growth that occurs in the **cervix**, usually due to persistent infection with certain types of **human papillomavirus**.

**cervical ectropion** A nonserious condition in which the mucus-producing cells found in the cervical canal begin to grow on the area around the opening of the **cervix**.

**cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN)** Abnormal, precancerous cells in the cervix. Mild forms may go away on their own, but more severe abnormalities may progress to **cervical cancer** if not treated. Also called cervical dysplasia or precancer.

**cervical laceration** See **laceration**.

**cervical mucus** A thick fluid plugging the opening of the **cervix**. Most of the time it is thick enough to prevent **sperm** from entering the **uterus**. At the midpoint of the **menstrual cycle**, however, the mucus becomes thin and watery, and sperm can more easily pass through.

**cervical stenosis** When the cervical opening is narrower than normal.

**cervicitis** See **purulent cervicitis**.

**cervix** The lower portion of the **uterus** extending into the upper **vagina** (see Female Anatomy, p. 364).

**chancroid** A **sexually transmitted infection** caused by a bacterium, which causes an ulcer to grow on the genitals.

**chlamydia** A **sexually transmitted infection** caused by a bacterium. If left untreated, it can cause infertility.

**cholecystectomy** Surgical removal of the gallbladder.

**cholestasis** Reduced flow of bile secreted by the liver.

**cirrhosis (of the liver)** See Liver disorders, Appendix B, p. 321.

**cryptorchidism** Failure of one or both **testes** to descend into the **scrotum** after birth.

**decontaminate (medical equipment)** To remove infectious organisms in order to make instruments, gloves, and other objects safer for people who clean them.

**deep vein thrombosis** See Deep vein thrombosis, Appendix B, p. 320.

**depression** A mental condition typically marked by dejection, despair, lack of hope, and sometimes either extreme tiredness or agitation.

**diabetes (diabetes mellitus)** A chronic disorder that occurs when blood glucose levels become too high because the body does not produce enough insulin or cannot use the insulin properly.

**disinfection** See **high-level disinfection**.

**dual protection** Avoiding both pregnancy and **sexually transmitted infection**.

**dysmenorrhea** Pain during **vaginal bleeding**, commonly known as menstrual cramps.

**eclampsia** A condition of late pregnancy, labor, and the period immediately after delivery characterized by convulsions. In serious cases, sometimes followed by coma and death.

**ectopic pregnancy** See Ectopic pregnancy, Appendix B, p. 320.

**ejaculation** The release of **semen** from the **penis** at orgasm.

**elephantiasis** A chronic and often extreme swelling and hardening of skin and tissue just beneath the skin, especially of the legs and **scrotum**, due to an obstruction in the lymphatic system (see **filariasis**).

**embryo** The product of fertilization of an egg (**ovum**) by a **sperm** during the first 8 weeks of development.

**endometrial cancer** Malignant (cancerous) growth in the lining of the **uterus**.

**endometriosis** A condition in which tissue of the **endometrium** grows outside the **uterus**. Tissue may attach itself to the reproductive organs or to other organs in the abdominal cavity. Can cause pelvic pain and impair fertility.

**endometrium** The membrane that lines the inner surface of the **uterus**. It thickens and is then shed once a month, causing **monthly bleeding**. During pregnancy, this lining is not shed but instead changes and produces hormones, helping to support the pregnancy (see Female Anatomy, p. 364).

**engorgement (breast engorgement)** A condition during breastfeeding that occurs when more milk accumulates in the breasts than the infant consumes. May make breasts feel full, hard, tender, and warm. Can be prevented (or relieved) by breastfeeding often and on demand.

**epididymis** A coiled tube (duct) attached to and lying on the **testes**. Developing **sperm** reach maturity and develop their swimming capabilities within this duct. The matured sperm leave the epididymis through the **vas deferens** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**epididymitis** Inflammation of the **epididymis**.

**epilepsy** A chronic disorder caused by disturbed brain function. May involve convulsions.

**estrogen** Hormone responsible for female sexual development. Natural estrogens, especially the **hormone** estradiol, are secreted by a mature ovarian **follicle**, which surrounds the egg (**ovum**). Also, a group of synthetic drugs that have effects similar to those of natural estrogen; some are used in some hormonal contraceptives.

**expulsion** When a contraceptive implant or intrauterine device fully or partially comes out of place.

**fallopian tube** Either of a pair of slender ducts that connect the **uterus** to the region of each **ovary**. **Fertilization** of an egg (**ovum**) by **sperm** usually takes place in one of the fallopian tubes (see Female Anatomy, p. 364).

**fertilization** Union of an **ovum** with a **sperm**.

**fetus** The product of **fertilization** from the end of the 8th week of pregnancy until birth (see **embryo**).

**fibroid** See **uterine fibroid**.

**fibrosis** The excess formation of fibrous tissue, as in reaction to organ damage.

**filariasis** A chronic parasitic disease caused by filarial worms. May lead to inflammation and permanent clogging of channels in the lymphatic system and **elephantiasis**.

**fixed uterus** A **uterus** that cannot be moved out of place, often as a result of **endometriosis**, past surgery, or infection.

**follicle** A small round structure in the **ovary**, each of which contains an egg (**ovum**). During **ovulation** a follicle on the surface of the ovary opens and releases a mature egg.

**foreskin** Hood of skin covering the end of the **penis** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**fully breastfeeding** See **breastfeeding**.

**gallbladder diseases** Conditions that affect the gallbladder, a sac located under the liver that stores bile used in fat digestion. May include inflammation, infection, or obstruction, gallbladder cancer, or gall stones (when the components of bile solidify within the organ).

**gastroenteritis** Inflammation of the stomach and intestine.

**genital herpes** A disease caused by a virus, spread by sexual contact.

**genital warts** Growths on the **vulva**, the vaginal wall, and the **cervix** in women, and on the **penis** in men. Caused by certain types of **human papillomavirus**.

**gestational trophoblast disease** Disease during pregnancy involving abnormal cell growth of the trophoblast, the outermost layer of cells of the developing **embryo**, which develops into the **placenta**.

**goiter** A noncancerous enlargement of the thyroid.

**gonorrhea** A **sexually transmitted infection** caused by a bacterium. If not treated, can cause **infertility**.

**heart attack** See Heart attack, Appendix B, p. 320. See also **ischemic heart disease**.

**heavy bleeding** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**hematocrit** The percentage of whole blood that is made up of red blood cells. Used as a measurement of **anemia**.

**hematoma** A bruise or area of skin discoloration caused by broken blood vessels beneath the skin.

**hematometra** An accumulation of blood in the **uterus**, which may occur following spontaneous or induced abortion.

**hemoglobin** The iron-containing material in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to the tissues of the body.

**hepatitis** See Liver disorders, Appendix B, p. 321.

**hernia** The projection of an organ, part of an organ, or any bodily structure through the wall that normally contains it.

**herpes** See **genital herpes**.

**high-level disinfection (medical instruments)** To destroy all living microorganisms except some forms of bacteria. Compare with **sterilize**.

**HIV** See **human immunodeficiency virus**.

**hormone** A chemical substance formed in one organ or part of the body and carried in the blood to another organ or part, where it works through chemical action. Also, manufactured chemical substances that function as hormones.

**human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** The virus that causes **acquired immune deficiency syndrome** (AIDS).

**human papillomavirus (HPV)** A common, highly contagious virus spread by sexual activity and skin-to-skin contact in the genital area. Certain subtypes of HPV are responsible for most cases of **cervical cancer**; others cause **genital warts**.

**hydrocele** The collection of fluid in a body cavity, especially in the **testes** or along the **spermatic cord** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**hyperlipidemia** High level of fats in the blood that increases the risk of heart disease.

**hypertension** Higher **blood pressure** than normal; 140 mm Hg or higher (systolic) or 90 mm Hg or higher (diastolic).

**hyperthyroidism** Too much production of thyroid **hormones**.

**hypothyroidism** Not enough production of thyroid **hormones**.

**implantation** The embedding of the **embryo** into the **endometrium** of the **uterus** where it establishes contact with the woman's blood supply for nourishment.

**infertility** The inability of a couple to produce living children.

**informed choice** A freely made decision based on clear, accurate, and relevant information. A goal of family planning counseling.

**infrequent bleeding** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**inguinal hernia** A **hernia** in the groin.

**intercourse** See **sex**.

**irregular bleeding** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**ischemic heart disease, ischemia** Ischemia is reduced blood flow to tissues of the body. When this reduced flow is in the arteries of the heart, it is called ischemic heart disease.

**jaundice** Abnormal yellowing of the skin and eyes. Usually a symptom of **liver disease**.

**labia** The inner and outer lips of the **vagina**, which protect the internal female organs (see Female Anatomy, p. 365).

**laceration** A wound or irregular tear of the flesh anywhere on the body, including the **cervix** and **vagina**.

**laparoscope** A device consisting of a tube with lenses for viewing the inside of an organ or body cavity. Used in diagnosis and in some female sterilization procedures.

**laparoscopy** A procedure performed with a laparoscope.

**latex allergy** When a person's body has a reaction to contact with latex, including persistent or recurring severe redness, itching, or swelling. In extreme cases, may lead to anaphylactic shock (see Severe allergic reaction to latex, Appendix B, p. 321).

**lesion** A disturbed or diseased area of skin or other body tissue.

**liver disease** Includes tumors, **hepatitis**, and **cirrhosis**.

**mastitis** An inflammation of breast tissue due to infection that may cause fever, redness, and pain.

**menarche** The beginning of cycles of **monthly bleeding**. Occurs during puberty after girls start producing **estrogen** and **progesterone**.

**menopause** The time in a woman's life when monthly bleeding stops permanently. Occurs when a woman's **ovaries** stop producing eggs (ova). A woman is considered menopausal after she has had no bleeding for 12 months.

**menorrhagia** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**menses, menstrual period, menstruation** See **monthly bleeding**.

**menstrual cycle** A repeating series of changes in the **ovaries** and **endometrium** that includes **ovulation** and **monthly bleeding**. Most women have cycles that each last between 24 and 35 days (see The Menstrual Cycle, p. 366).

**migraine aura** A nervous system disturbance that affects sight and sometimes touch and speech (see Identifying Migraine Headaches and Auras, p. 368).

**migraine headache** A type of severe, recurrent headache (see Identifying Migraine Headaches and Auras, p. 368).

**minilaparotomy** A female sterilization technique performed by bringing the **fallopian tubes** to a small incision in the abdomen and then usually tying and cutting them.

**miscarriage** Natural loss of pregnancy during the first 20 weeks.

**monthly bleeding** Monthly flow of bloody fluid from the **uterus** through the **vagina** in adult women, which takes place between **menarche** and **menopause**. Also, the monthly flow of bloody fluid that women have while using hormonal contraceptives (a withdrawal bleed).

**mucous membrane** Membrane lining passages and cavities of the body that come in contact with air.

**nearly fully breastfeeding** See **breastfeeding**.

**nephropathy** Kidney disease, including damage to the small blood vessels in the kidneys from long-standing diabetes.

**neuropathy** Nervous system or nerve disease, including nerve degeneration due to damage to the small blood vessels in the nervous system from long-standing diabetes.

**nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)** A class of drugs used to reduce pain, fever, and swelling.

**orchitis** Inflammation of a **testis** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**ovarian cyst** Fluid-filled sac that develops in the **ovary** or on its surface. Usually disappears on its own but may rupture and cause pain and complications.

**ovaries** A pair of female sex glands that store and release ova (see **ovum**) and produce the sex hormones **estrogen** and **progesterone** (see Female Anatomy, p. 364).

**ovulation** The release of an **ovum** from an **ovary**.

**ovum** Reproductive egg cell produced by the **ovaries**.

**partially breastfeeding** See **breastfeeding**.

**pelvic inflammatory disease** See Pelvic inflammatory disease, Appendix B, p. 321.

**pelvic tuberculosis** Infection of the pelvic organs by **tuberculosis** bacteria from the lungs.

**pelvis** The skeletal structure located in the lower part of the human torso, resting on the legs and supporting the spine. In females, also refers to the hollow portion of the pelvic bone structure through which the **fetus** passes during birth.

**penis** The male organ for urination and sexual intercourse (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**perforation** A hole in the wall of an organ or the process of making the hole, as with a medical instrument.

**placenta** The organ that nourishes a growing **fetus**. The placenta (afterbirth) is formed during pregnancy and comes out of the **uterus** within a few minutes after the birth of a baby.

**postpartum** After childbirth; the first 6 weeks after childbirth.

**pre-eclampsia** **Hypertension** with either excess protein in the urine, or local or generalized swelling, or both (but without convulsions) after 20 weeks of pregnancy. May progress to **eclampsia**.

**premature birth** A birth that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

**preventive measures** Actions taken to prevent disease, such as washing hands or providing drugs or other therapy.

**progesterone** A steroid **hormone** that is produced by the **ovary** after **ovulation**. Prepares the **endometrium** for **implantation** of a fertilized egg (**ovum**), protects the **embryo**, enhances development of the **placenta**, and helps prepare the breasts for **breastfeeding**.

**progestin (progestogen)** Any of a large group of synthetic drugs that have effects similar to those of **progesterone**. Some are used in hormonal contraceptives.

**prolonged bleeding** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**prolonged rupture of membranes** Occurs when the fluid-filled sac surrounding a pregnant woman's fetus breaks 24 hours or more before delivery of the infant.

**prophylaxis** See **preventive measures**.

**prostate** Male reproductive organ where some of the **semen** is produced (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**puerperal sepsis** Infection of the reproductive organs during the first 42 days **postpartum** (puerperium).

**pulmonary embolism** See Pulmonary embolism, Appendix B, p. 321.

**pulmonary hypertension** Continuous **hypertension** in the pulmonary artery, impeding blood flow from the heart to the lungs.

**purulent cervicitis** Inflammation of the **cervix** accompanied by a **pus**-like discharge. Often indicates infection with gonorrhea or chlamydia.

**pus** A yellowish-white fluid formed in infected tissue.

**retinopathy** Disease of the retina (nerve tissue lining the back of the eye), including damage to the small blood vessels to the retina from long-standing diabetes.

**ruptured ectopic pregnancy** See Ruptured ectopic pregnancy, Appendix B, p. 321.

**schistosomiasis** A parasitic disease caused by a flatworm living in a snail host. People become infected while wading or bathing in water containing larvae of the infected snails.

**scrotum** The pouch of skin behind the **penis** that contains the **testes** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**semen** The thick, white fluid produced by a man's reproductive organs and released through the **penis** during **ejaculation**. Contains **sperm** unless the man has had a vasectomy.

**seminal vesicles** Male organs where **sperm** mixes with **semen** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**sepsis** The presence of various **pus**-forming and disease-causing organisms, or poisonous substances that they produce, in the blood or body tissues.

**septic abortion** Induced or **spontaneous abortion** involving infection.

**sex, sexual intercourse** Sexual activity in which the penis is inserted into a body cavity.

- anal** Sex involving the anus.
- oral** Sex involving the mouth.
- vaginal** Sex involving the vagina.

**sexually transmitted infection (STI)** Any of a group of bacterial, fungal, and viral infections and parasites that are transmitted during sexual activity.

**sickle cell anemia, sickle cell disease** Hereditary, chronic form of **anemia**. Blood cells take on an abnormal sickle or crescent shape when deprived of oxygen.

**speculum** A medical tool used to widen a body opening to better see inside. A speculum is inserted into the vagina to help see the cervix.

**sperm** The male sex cell. Sperm are produced in the **testes** of an adult male, mixed with **semen** in the **seminal vesicles**, and released during **ejaculation** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**spermatic cord** A cord consisting of the **vas deferens**, arteries, veins, nerves, and lymphatic vessels that passes from the groin down to the back of each **testis** (see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**spontaneous abortion** See **miscarriage**.

**spotting** See **vaginal bleeding**.

**sterilize (medical equipment)** To destroy all microorganisms, including spores that are not killed by **high-level disinfection**.

**stroke** See Stroke, Appendix B, p. 321.

**superficial thrombophlebitis** Inflammation of a vein just beneath the skin due to a blood clot.

**syphilis** A **sexually transmitted infection** caused by a bacterium. If untreated, may progress to systemic infection, causing general paralysis and dementia or be transmitted to the fetus during pregnancy or childbirth.

**tampon** A plug of cotton or other absorbent material used to absorb fluids, such as a plug inserted in the vagina to absorb bloody flow during **monthly bleeding**.

**testes, testicles** The 2 male reproductive organs that produce **sperm** and the **hormone** testosterone. Located in the **scrotum**. (Testis if referring to one of the testes; see Male Anatomy, p. 367).

**thalassemia** An inherited type of **anemia**.

**thromboembolic disorder (or disease)** Abnormal clotting of blood in the blood vessels.

**thrombogenic mutations** Any of several genetic disorders that causes abnormal thickening or clotting of the blood.

**thrombophlebitis** Inflammation of a vein due to the presence of a blood clot (see **thrombosis**).

**thrombosis** Formation of a blood clot inside a blood vessel.

**thrush** See **candidiasis**.

**thyroid disease** Any disease of the thyroid (see **hyperthyroid, hypothyroid**).

**toxic shock syndrome** See Toxic shock syndrome, Appendix B, p. 321.

**trichomoniasis** A **sexually transmitted infection** caused by a protozoan.

**trophoblast disease** See **gestational trophoblastic disease**.

**tuberculosis** A contagious disease caused by a bacterium. Most commonly infects the respiratory system; also infects the organs in a woman's **pelvis**, and then known as **pelvic tuberculosis**.

**urethra** Tube through which urine is released from the body (see *Female Anatomy*, p. 365 and *Male Anatomy*, p. 367). In men, **semen** also passes through the urethra.

**uterine fibroid** Noncancerous tumor that grows in the muscle of the **uterus**.

**uterine perforation** Puncturing of the wall of the **uterus**, which may occur during an induced abortion or with insertion of an intrauterine device.

**uterine rupture** A tear of the **uterus**, typically during labor or late pregnancy.

**uterus** The hollow, muscular organ that carries the **fetus** during pregnancy. Also called the womb (see *Female Anatomy*, p. 364).

**vagina** The passage joining the outer sexual organs with the **uterus** in females (see *Female Anatomy*, p. 364).

**vaginal bleeding** Any bloody vaginal discharge (pink, red, or brown) that requires the use of sanitary protection (pads, cloths, or tampons). Different vaginal bleeding patterns include:

**amenorrhea** No bleeding at all at expected bleeding times.

**breakthrough bleeding** Any bleeding outside of expected bleeding times (i.e., outside of regular monthly bleeding) that requires use of sanitary protection.

**heavy bleeding (menorrhagia)** Bleeding that is twice as heavy as a woman's usual bleeding.

**infrequent bleeding** Fewer than 2 bleeding episodes over 3 months.

**irregular bleeding** Spotting and/or breakthrough bleeding that occurs outside of expected bleeding times (i.e., outside of regular monthly bleeding).

**menstrual bleeding, monthly bleeding.** Bleeding that takes place, on average, for 3-7 days about every 28 days.

**prolonged bleeding** Bleeding that lasts longer than 8 days.

**spotting** Any bloody vaginal discharge outside of expected bleeding times that requires no sanitary protection.

**vaginal mucus** The fluid secreted by glands in the **vagina**.

**vaginitis** Inflammation of the **vagina**. May be due to infection by bacteria, viruses, or fungi, or to chemical irritation. Not a sexually transmitted infection.

**valvular heart disease** Health problems due to improperly functioning heart valves.

**varicose veins** Enlarged, twisted veins, most commonly seen in veins just beneath the skin of the legs.

**vas deferens (vas, vasa)** 2 muscular tubes that transport **sperm** from the **testes** to the **seminal vesicles**. These tubes are cut or blocked during a vasectomy (see *Male Anatomy*, p. 367).

**vascular disease** Any disease of the blood vessels.

**vulva** The exterior female genitals.

**warts** See **genital warts**.

**withdrawal bleed** See **monthly bleeding**.

**womb** See **uterus**.

**yeast infection** See **candidiasis**.