

Reproductive Technologies Vocabulary

Word	Definition
amniocentesis	A common prenatal test in which a small sample of the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus is removed and examined. It is the most common prenatal test used to diagnose chromosomal and genetic birth defects.
analgesic	A drug that relieves pain while still keeping the patient conscious.
anemia	A condition in which a reduction in the number or volume of red blood corpuscles, or of the total amount of hemoglobin in the bloodstream, exists, resulting in paleness, generalized weakness, etc.
anesthetic	A substance that causes lack of feeling or awareness.
assisted reproductive technology (ART)	A set of techniques to help a woman achieve pregnancy after other surgical and hormonal methods have failed, encompassing controlled ovarian hyperstimulation (COH) and intrauterine insemination (IUI), in-vitro fertilization-embryo transfer (IVF-ET), gamete intrafallopian transfer GIFT and zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT).
biochemical or chemical pregnancy	An early miscarriage pregnancy confirmed by blood and urine test only. The pregnancy stops growing before it can be seen on an ultrasound.
catheter	A slender, hollow tube inserted into a body passage for passing fluids, draining urine from the bladder, making examinations, etc.
chorionic villus sampling (CVS)	A prenatal test to detect birth defects, genetic diseases and other problems. During the test, a small sample of cells (called chorionic villi) is taken from the placenta where it attaches to the wall of the uterus. Chorionic villi are tiny parts of the placenta that are formed from the fertilized egg, so they have the same genes as the baby.
clinical pregnancy	A pregnancy witnessed through a pregnancy ultrasound.
congenital malformation	A physical defect present in a baby at birth, irrespective of whether the defect is caused by a genetic factor or by prenatal events that are not genetic. The effect is permanent.
Down syndrome	A chromosomal disorder caused by the presence or all or part of an extra 21 st chromosome. It is often characterized by impairment of cognitive ability and physical or facial appearance. Down syndrome can usually be identified during pregnancy or at birth.
dura	A tough, fluid-filled sac that surrounds the spinal cord.
ectopic pregnancy	A pregnancy that is not in the uterus. The fertilized egg settles and grows in any location other than the inner lining of the uterus. Most (95%) ectopic pregnancies occur in the fallopian tube. However, they can occur in other locations, such as the ovary, cervix and abdominal cavity.
embryo transfer	When IVF is successful, this is the process used to physically place the embryo in a woman's uterus.
epidural	An anesthetic injected into the epidural space surrounding the fluid-filled sac (the dura) around the spine, which partially numbs the abdomen and legs.
episiotomy	A surgical procedure for widening the outlet of the birth canal to facilitate delivery of the baby and avoid a jagged rip of the perineum (the area between the anus and the vulva, the opening to the vagina). During an episiotomy, an incision is made between the vagina and the rectum.
follicular aspiration	The application of light suction to the ovarian follicle during the egg retrieval procedure to remove the eggs for use in in-vitro fertilization (IVF).

general anesthetic	An anesthetic that causes a loss of consciousness (that is, puts the patient “to sleep”).
gestational trophoblastic disease	A disease in which tumors form inside the uterus.
in-vitro fertilization (IVF)	Fertilization by manually combining an egg and sperm in a laboratory dish.
incubator	An artificially-heated container used for hatching eggs or in which premature babies are kept for a period.
insemination	To impregnate by intercourse or by artificially injecting semen.
intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)	A technique that requires the penetration of the egg with a sharp glass tool through which a single, selected sperm is introduced directly into the cytoplasm.
intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR)	The growth of the fetus is abnormally slow. When born, the baby appears too small, considering its age. IUGR is associated with increased risk of medical illness and death in the newborn. Also known as “intrauterine growth restriction.”
local infiltration anesthetic	A type of pain medication used specifically to relieve the discomfort of an episiotomy, or when a tear is to be repaired after delivery.
miscarriage	The natural expulsion of a fetus or embryo from the womb before it is sufficiently developed to survive.
narcotic	A drug that causes insensibility or stupor.
ovulation induction	Use of female hormone therapy to stimulate oocyte (unfertilized egg) development and release.
placenta previa	A placenta that is located in the lower part of the womb such that the placenta partially or completely covers the cervix. Also known as “low placenta.”
placental abruption	The premature separation of the placenta from the wall of the uterus, a potentially serious situation for mother and baby.
prenatal	Existing or taking place before birth.
pudendal block	Injecting a drug directly into the vaginal walls shortly before delivery to numb the perineum.
Rh disease	A condition in which the mother and fetus have different, or “incompatible,” Rh blood group types. The fetus’ red blood cells may be attacked by antibodies produced in the mother, causing an abnormal breakup of the red blood cells in both the fetus and newborn. Also known as Rh incompatibility disease.
spinal block	A labor anesthetic injected directly into the dura all at once. A spinal block provides pain relief from the chest down for up to two hours.
systemic-analgesic	An analgesic that affects the entire nervous system.
trimester	In human pregnancy, a period of time lasting approximately three months.
ultrasound	A method of seeing the fetus and female pelvic organs during pregnancy. The ultrasound machine sends out high-frequency sound waves that bounce off body structures to create an image. Also called a sonogram.
walking epidural	Epidurals that contain narcotics to help relieve pain while still leaving the patient some muscle strength to walk.