

A

After pains or afterbirth pains: Contractions of the uterus that occur after your baby is born, as the uterus returns to its normal size. This may cause cramping for a few days, especially if this is not your first baby or if you are nursing.

Amniocentesis: the removal of a sample of amniotic fluid by means of a needle inserted through the mother's abdominal wall; used for genetic and biochemical analysis of the baby.

Amniotic fluid: the liquid surrounding and protecting the baby within the amniotic sac throughout pregnancy.

Amniotic sac: the membrane within the uterus that contains the baby and the amniotic fluid.

Analgesic: Medication that relieves or reduces pain.

Anesthesia: Loss of feeling. There are three ways of doing this: general, local and epidural.

Anesthesiologist: A doctor who specializes in the use of anesthesia.

Anesthetist: A registered nurse who has special training in anesthesia.

Apgar score rating: A system to evaluate the health of your baby immediately after birth. The score can be zero to 10, based on appearance and color, pulse, reflexes, activity and respiration.

B

Baby blues: A mild depression many women feel in the first few weeks after birth.

Braxton-Hicks contractions: Mild, usually painless contractions that occur during the entire pregnancy, but are only felt from the 5th month on.

Breech birth: Baby is born feet or buttocks first.

C

Cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD): Baby's head is too large for the mother's pelvic bones.

Cervix: the neck of the uterus; Pap smears are taken from the cervix.

Cesarean section: Delivery of the baby through an incision into the skin of the abdomen, the underlying tissues, and the uterus.

Circumcision: Surgical removal of the foreskin of a baby's penis. Discuss this decision with your health care provider during your pregnancy.

Chemical pregnancy: An early loss that ends before the next period is due. There are usually no

pregnancy symptoms, but a blood test can reveal small amounts of the pregnancy hormone HCG.

Chlamydia: A bacteria associated with various diseases of the eye and urogenital tract; may be transmitted by sexual contact. This is the most common infection passed from mother to baby; the baby may develop pneumonia (often a mild case) and eye infections.

Cord accident: Any problem with the umbilical cord that causes distress or death of the baby (the cord is wrapped tightly around the baby's neck, cord prolapse in which part of the umbilical cord is presented before the baby at delivery, potentially causing the baby's death because the cord becomes compressed between the baby and the mother's pelvis, cutting off the baby's oxygen supply, etc.).

D
Dilation (dilatation): Stretching and widening of the cervical opening during labor.

Doula: A professional labor support person (coach) or helper during labor.

E
Ectopic pregnancy: A pregnancy occurring elsewhere than in the uterus, most often in a fallopian tube. Symptoms includes spasmodic, crampy pain with tenderness starting on one side and often spreading throughout the abdomen; pain may worsen on straining of the bowels, coughing, or moving. Often, brown vaginal spotting or light bleeding, intermittent or continuous, may precede pain by several days or weeks. Sometimes nausea and vomiting, dizziness or weakness, shoulder pain, and/or rectal pressure may be experienced. Getting to the hospital immediately is important.

Effacement: Thinning of the cervix during labor, measured in percent from 0 to 100.

Embryo: The developing baby from conception to about the end of the second month. After that point, the baby is called a fetus.

Engagement: The point in labor when the baby's head (or other part that is coming first) is well down in the pelvis.

Engorgement: Congestion of the fluid in the breast which may occur 1-2 days after the birth. It lasts about 24 hours.

Episiotomy: Cutting of the area between the vagina and the rectum near the end of the second stage of labor to enlarge the opening. If an episiotomy is needed, it will be done just before the birth.

F
Fetal heart tones (FHT): The baby's heartbeat. Normal rate is between 120-160 beats per minute.

Fetus: The baby from the end of the eighth week until birth.

Forceps: An instrument used to assist in difficult births.

Fundus: The rounded top part of the uterus.

G

Gestation: The period of fetal development in the womb from implantation to birth.

Gravida: The number of pregnancies. Primagravida refers to a woman carrying her first pregnancy. Multipara or multip refers to a woman who already has one baby.

Gynecologist: A doctor who specializes in the diseases and the routine physical care of the reproductive system of women.

H

Hemorrhoids: Painful swelling of blood vessels in the anus.

I

Induction of labor: The process, not always successful, in which labor is started by artificial means due to a pregnancy complication.

Infertility: The inability to conceive. Repeated consecutive pregnancy losses without a live birth may also be referred to as infertility.

IV (intravenous): Method of giving a sterile fluid into a vein for nutrition, hydration or medicine.

J

Jaundice: Yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, common in newborn babies on the 2nd or 3rd day after birth.

K

Kegel exercises: Tensing and relaxing perineal muscles during pregnancy to improve muscle tone in preparation for labor.

L

Laparoscopy: A procedure performed under general anesthesia in which an optical instrument, the laparoscope, is inserted through a small incision in the abdominal wall, enabling the doctor to see the fallopian tubes, uterus, and ovaries directly.

Lochia: The discharge of blood, mucus and tissue from the uterus after the birth of a baby.

M

Meconium: A baby's first bowel movement, usually green-black and sticky.

Midwife: A person who assists women in childbirth.

Milla: Small pimples or cysts which newborns often have.

Miscarriage: A lay term describing spontaneous loss of pregnancy before the middle of the second trimester (20 weeks). The medical term for miscarriage is actually "abortion," and many doctors and

technicians may use this term instead.

N

Neonatal: Referring to the first 42 days of a newborn's life.

O

Obstetrician: A physician specializing in pregnancy and delivery.

Ovary: The female organs that produce sex hormones and ova (eggs).

Ovulation: The release of a mature, unfertilized egg from the ovary.

Oxytocin (pitocin): A hormone a pregnant woman usually produces with stimulates contractions and the ejection of milk from the breast.

P

Para: Pregnancies which last long enough to produce a viable fetus.

Pelvis: The group of bones connecting your legs to your spine.

Perinatal doctor/perinatologist: A doctor specializing in treating the baby and mother during pregnancy, labor, and delivery, particularly when the mother and/or baby are at a high risk for complications.

Perineum: The area between the vagina and the rectum.

Pitocin (oxytocin): A drug (given intravenously) used to induce labor.

Placenta: The vascular organ that supplies the baby with maternal blood and nutrients through the umbilical cord.

Placenta abruption: The separation of the placenta from the uterus before the baby is born.

Placenta previa: A condition in which the placenta is located over the cervix, creating a risk of hemorrhage during labor and delivery. Such pregnancies can usually be delivered safely through cesarean section.

Postpartum: 6-week period after delivery.

Postpartum depression: A prolonged period (more than 2 months) of sadness, mood swings, crying spells and mixed feelings about motherhood. Mild feeling such as these are common in new mothers, but if the feelings persist, talk with your health care provider.

Preeclampsia: Development of hypertension (high blood pressure) with proteinuria (an excess of urinary protein) or edema (an excessive amount of fluid in the tissues), or both, due to pregnancy or the influence of a recent pregnancy; it usually occurs after the 20th week of gestation but may develop before this time in the presence of trophoblastic disease. Also called "toxemia." In some cases, preeclampsia may lead to eclampsia or to HELLP syndrome.

Pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH): Elevated blood pressure caused by pregnancy.

Premature: A baby born before 37 weeks' gestation.

Presentation: Position of the baby before birth. Head first is called cephalic or vertex. Feet or buttocks first is called breech. Shoulder first is a transverse lie.

Preterm: Labor that begins between the 20th and 37th weeks of pregnancy.

R

Reproductive endocrinologist: An endocrinologist specializing in reproductive disorders.

Rh factor: Genetically determined antigens present in the red blood cells of most persons and capable of inducing intense immunologic reactions. Some women develop a sensitization to Rh during pregnancy. If a woman is Rh negative and her husband is Rh positive, she is a candidate for Rh incompatibility problems. After the first pregnancy, the Rh factor enters the Rh-negative mother's circulatory system during the delivery (or miscarriage) of a child who has inherited the Rh factor from his father. The mother's body then produces antibodies against it. If she becomes pregnant with another Rh-positive baby, the antibodies cross the placenta and attack the baby's red blood cells, causing mild to serious anemia in the baby.

Rhogam: An immunization given to Rh-negative women after a miscarriage, stillbirth, or live birth to prevent production of antibodies in any Rh-positive babies they may have in future pregnancies.

Rubella (German measles): A viral disease characterized by headache, fever, rash, and inflammation of the throat. Infection in a pregnant mother can damage the baby. The risks are greater the earlier in the pregnancy that the mother contracts the illness.

S

Show: Vaginal fluid made up of mucus and blood released before and during labor.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome): Abrupt and inexplicable death of an apparently healthy infant. Also called crib death or cot death.

Sonogram (also called ultrasound): A visualization of internal organs achieved by bouncing sound waves into a pregnant woman's abdomen. A level 1 ultrasound is usually done to date a pregnancy. A level 2 ultrasound is used for more specific diagnostic purposes. Sonograms can detect a number of problems, but like all medical tests, they are not 100% perfect.

Spina bifida: An abnormality in the development of the spine that can cause severe neurological impairment and paralysis.

Station: How low the baby is in the pelvis.

Stillbirth: The death of a baby of at least 20 weeks' gestation before delivery.

T

Toxemia: See "preeclampsia."

Trimester: One of the 3-month periods into which a pregnancy is divided.

Tubal ligation (tying the tubes): Permanent birth control that involves cutting or closing off the fallopian tubes to block sperm from reaching and fertilizing an egg.

U

Ultrasound: A visualization of internal organs achieved by bouncing sound waves into a pregnant woman's abdomen. A level 1 ultrasound is usually done to date a pregnancy. A level 2 ultrasound is used for more specific diagnostic purposes. Sonograms can detect a number of problems, but like all medical tests, they are not 100% perfect.

Umbilical cord: The cord that connects a baby's belly button to the placenta before the baby is born.

Urethra: The tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body.

Uterus/womb: The female reproductive organ that contains the developing baby.

V

Vagina (birth canal): The curved, elastic canal from the perineum to the uterus.

VBAC: Vaginal birth after Cesarean.

Vernix caseosa: A creamy white substance covering a baby before it is born.

Viable/viability: The ability of an infant to survive outside the womb