

Glossary

- Abortion, complete.** A miscarriage in which all of the products of conception have been expelled and the cervix has closed.
- Abortion, incomplete.** A miscarriage in which all of the products of conception have not been expelled from the uterus.
- Abortion, induced.** Intentional termination of a pregnancy.
- Abortion, inevitable.** A miscarriage that cannot be halted.
- Abortion, missed.** A miscarriage in which a dead fetus and other products of conception remain in the uterus for four or more weeks.
- Abortion, selective.** The term often used to refer to intentional termination of a pregnancy after a finding of deformity in the fetus.
- Abortion, spontaneous.** Miscarriage; unintended ending of a pregnancy before the twentieth week.
- Abortion, therapeutic.** The intentional termination of a pregnancy for the purpose of preserving the life of the mother.
- Abortion, threatened.** Symptoms such as vaginal bleeding with or without pain, which may either end with a miscarriage or with the continuation of a normal pregnancy.
- Abruptio placentae.** A condition in which the placenta detaches itself prematurely from the uterus, cutting off the fetus's supply of oxygen.
- Adhesions.** Scar tissue which binds two surfaces together that are usually apart from each other.
- AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).** A fatal disease affecting the immune system, which can be transmitted through sexual contact or exchange of blood.
- Alpha fetoprotein.** A protein normally produced by a fetus, which can be measured prenatally to identify possible birth defects.
- Amniocentesis.** A procedure for removing a sample of amniotic fluid from the uterus by way of a needle inserted through the mother's abdominal wall in order to obtain information about the fetus.
- Amniotic fluid.** The fluid surrounding the fetus in the uterus which protects it during pregnancy and labor.

- Amnencephaly.** A congenital condition characterized by absence of brain and spinal cord.
- Anesthesia.** A drug or gas that gives partial or complete loss of sensation with or without loss of consciousness.
- Anomaly.** A malformation or abnormality in any part of the body.
- Anoxia.** The lack or absence of oxygen.
- Artificial insemination.** The mechanical injection of viable semen into the vagina in order to fertilize an egg.
- Bereavement.** The state of having experienced a significant loss.
- Bonding.** The process of attachment between infant and parents; this relationship can start even before conception.
- Breech birth.** Delivery of an infant's feet or buttocks first instead of the head.
- Catheter.** A tube for evacuating or injecting fluids.
- Cerclage.** A surgical technique for closing the cervix during pregnancy so that a woman with an incompetent cervix will not deliver prematurely.
- Cervix.** The lower section of the uterus, which protrudes into the vagina and dilates during labor to allow the passage of the infant.
- Caesarean section.** The surgical removal of the fetus by means of an incision through the abdominal wall into the uterus.
- Childbirth educator.** An individual, usually a nurse, who prepares expectant parents for childbirth by practicing relaxation techniques and reviewing what can be expected during labor and delivery.
- Chorionic Biopsy.** (See Chorionic Villus Sampling.)
- Chorionic Villus Sampling.** A technique for obtaining a sample of preplacental tissue from the uterus in order to look for chromosomal abnormalities.
- Conception.** The union between the egg and sperm to create a new life.
- Congenital.** Present at birth, although not necessarily hereditary.
- Crib death.** (See Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.)
- D & C (Dilation and Curettage).** A procedure involving the expansion of the cervix and the insertion of a loop-shaped instrument to scrape the inner lining of the uterus.
- D & E (Dilation and Evacuation).** A procedure in which the cervix is dilated and the uterine contents are removed, either by a suction device or with curettage.
- DES (Diethylstilbestrol).** Synthetic estrogen used sometimes as a "morning-after pill," formerly thought to prevent miscarriage.
- Down's syndrome.** A genetic abnormality, formerly known as mongolism, characterized by the presence of an extra chromosome 21 and moderate to severe retardation.
- Ectopic pregnancy.** A pregnancy that occurs outside the uterine cavity.
- Embryo.** The term used to describe the early stages of fetal growth, from the fourth to the ninth week of pregnancy.
- Endometriosis.** A condition characterized by pieces of the uterine lining locating themselves anywhere outside the uterine cavity.
- Episiotomy.** A surgical incision made in order to enlarge the external vaginal opening during delivery to prevent tearing.

- Estrogen.** A hormone responsible for developing the female reproductive cycle.
- Euthanasia.** Killing a person with an incurable and painful disease mercifully.
- Fallopian tube.** The tube that carries the egg from the ovary to the uterus.
- Fetal blood sampling.** A procedure to get fetal blood by inserting a needle into the umbilical cord.
- Fetal death.** The term often used to include both miscarriage and stillbirth.
- Fetoscopy.** A technique for directly visualizing a fetus while in the uterus and extracting a fetal blood sample; placental aspiration.
- Fetus.** The developing baby from approximately the ninth week of pregnancy until the moment of birth.
- Forceps.** An instrument sometimes used to assist in the delivery of an infant.
- Genetic abnormality.** A disorder arising from an anomaly in the chromosomal structure which may or may not be hereditary.
- Genetic counseling.** Advice and information provided, usually by a team of experts, on the detection and risk of recurrence of genetic disorders.
- Gestation.** The period of fetal development in the uterus from conception to birth.
- Gonorrhea.** A sexually transmitted disease.
- Grief.** The emotional reaction to the loss of a significant person or object.
- Habitual abortion.** Miscarriages occurring in three or more pregnancies.
- HCG (Human Chorionic Gonadotropin).** A hormone manufactured by the fertilized egg. Its presence is an indication of a pregnancy.
- Hemophilia.** A hereditary blood disease characterized by failure of the blood to clot and the occurrence of abnormal bleeding.
- Hemorrhage.** Excessive bleeding.
- Hereditary.** Transmitted from one's ancestors by way of genes within the chromosomes of the fertilizing sperm and egg.
- Hysterotomy.** A surgical procedure for the removal of a fetus; a type of induced abortion used occasionally during the second trimester.
- Incompetent cervix.** A weakened cervix that is unable to hold the fetus in the uterus the full nine months, sometimes a cause of late miscarriage or premature birth.
- Induction of labor.** The use of agents to stimulate the onset of labor or to increase the speed and intensity of labor.
- Intrauterine device (IUD).** A birth control device inserted in the uterus.
- In vitro fertilization (IVF).** A procedure in which eggs are removed from a woman and mixed with sperm in a petri dish. After two days the fertilized eggs are inserted back into the woman's uterus.
- Isolette.** An incubator for infants in distress, providing controlled temperature and oxygen supply.
- IUD.** (See Intrauterine device.)
- Klinefelter's syndrome.** A genetic abnormality which appears only in males. Characterized by an extra X chromosome, it causes secondary female characteristics, infertility, and possible retardation.
- La Leche League.** An international organization for the promotion of breast-feeding.
- Lamaze.** A commonly used approach to prepared childbirth.

- Laparoscopy.** Surgical procedure for visualizing the ovaries and fallopian tubes.
- Low birth weight.** The weight of a baby at birth if it is under 2500 grams (five and one-half pounds).
- Maternal Serum Alpha Fetoprotein (MSAFP).** A blood test that checks to see if the fetus has neural tube defects.
- Midwife.** An individual, now usually a nurse, who is specially trained in the practice of obstetrics.
- Miscarriage.** (See Abortion, spontaneous.)
- Mutagen.** A substance that alters the genetic structure of the sperm or ovum before conception.
- Neonatal.** Referring to the first twenty-eight days after birth.
- Neonatal death.** The death of a live-born infant within twenty-eight days of birth.
- Neonatal intensive care unit.** Also called intensive care nursery (I.C.N.). A special-care nursery for seriously ill newborns, usually located in regional medical centers.
- Neonatologist.** A pediatrician who is specially trained in the care of newborns.
- Ovum.** Female reproductive cell.
- Perinatal.** Referring to the period of time from the twentieth week of pregnancy through the first twenty-eight days after birth.
- PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease).** Any inflammation of a woman's pelvic organs. Symptoms may include pain, fever, and vaginal discharge.
- Placenta.** Spongy organ attached to the wall of the uterus through which nourishment and oxygen pass from the bloodstream of the mother through the umbilical cord into the bloodstream of the fetus.
- Placental Aspiration.** A technique that allows a direct view of the fetus and extracts a small sample of blood from the fetus.
- Placenta previa.** Abnormally low implantation of the placenta in the uterus.
- Postmaturity.** The birth of an infant after forty-two weeks of gestation.
- Prematurity.** The birth of an infant before thirty-eight weeks of gestation.
- Progesterone.** A hormone responsible for changes in the reproductive cycle that allow the embryo to implant.
- Prolapsed cord.** Expulsion of a loop of umbilical cord after the membranes have ruptured but prior to delivery. Pressure on the cord from the emerging baby will cut off the baby's blood supply.
- Prostaglandin.** A hormone which, when injected into the amniotic sac surrounding the fetus or given in the form of a vaginal suppository, induces labor; it is often used in second trimester abortions.
- Saline.** A salt solution which, when injected into the amniotic sac, leads to the death of the fetus; it is sometimes used during second trimester abortions.
- Salpingectomy.** Surgical removal of one or both fallopian tubes.
- Sonography.** (See ultrasound.)
- Salpingostomy.** An operation to make an opening in the fallopian tube. Can be done to remove an embryo without severing the tube.
- Sperm.** Male reproductive cell.
- Spina bifida.** An abnormality in the development of the spine, sometimes characterized by severe neurological impairment and paralysis.

- Stillbirth.** Death before birth of a fetus that is at least twenty weeks of gestation.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).** Unexplained death of infants usually during sleep.
- Teratogen.** A substance that alters fetal growth and development and causes birth abnormalities.
- Term.** Forty weeks' gestation; the baby's due date.
- Toxemia.** Often referred to as pre-eclampsia, an abnormal condition of late pregnancy characterized by swelling, high blood pressure, and protein in the urine.
- Trimester.** One of the three-month periods into which pregnancy is divided.
- Trisomy 18.** A genetic abnormality characterized by an extra chromosome 18 and severe mental retardation and physical anomalies.
- Tubal ligation.** A surgical procedure, involving tying off or cauterizing the fallopian tubes, which is used for sterilization of women.
- Ultrasound.** A technique for visualizing the fetus in the uterus which allows for estimating the size and detecting some abnormalities; also called pulse-echo sonography.
- Umbilical cord.** The lifeline through which nourishment, oxygen, and waste products pass between the placenta and the fetus.
- Uterus.** Womb; the female organ in which the fetus grows during pregnancy.
- Vernix.** An oily substance covering the fetus due to secretion of skin glands.
- Viability.** Capability of surviving outside the uterus; usually after twenty weeks gestation.

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