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**Maternal terminology and definition**

**Obstetrician** – a doctor who has undertaken specialist training in pregnancy and childbirth.

**Gynecologist** – a doctor who has undertaken specialist training in women’s health.

**Pediatrician** – a doctor who has undertaken specialist training in treating children.

**Conception** – the process of becoming pregnant, when a sperm and egg join to form a single cell (alternative terms include ‘fertilization’, ‘impregnation’ and ‘insemination’)

**Pregnancy**: can be a time of great excitement to the patient, but it can also be a time of danger, and there are certain serious illnesses of pregnancy to be aware of.

**Fertilization** is the union of the ovum and spermatozoa. Fertilization must occur fairly quickly after release of the ovum because it usually occurs in the outer third of a fallopian tube.

**Antenatal** is a term used to describe the time from conception and during pregnancy.

**Antenatal Care**: is the care given to a woman during her pregnancy.

**Last Menstrual Period (LMP):**This date is used to work out how many weeks pregnant you are. The count starts from the first day of LMP.

**Estimated date of delivery ( EDD);** is the term used to describe the estimated time when a baby may be born, the EDD is roughly 40 weeks from conception, although babies are considered term and may be born anytime between 37-42 weeks of pregnancy (earlier than this would be considered pre-term).

**Postnatal** – a term meaning ‘after birth’ (alternative terms are ‘post-birth’ and ‘postpartum’)

**Uterus** – a woman’s womb

**Fundus:**This is the top of the uterus. The ‘fundal’ height helps assess the growth of the baby and how many weeks pregnant are. It’s the length in centimetres between the top of the uterus and the pubic bone.

**Cervix** – the narrow, lower end of the uterus that softens and opens during labor to allow the baby to come out.

**Fallopian tubes**– the narrow ducts or tubes in a woman’s abdomen that carry the egg from the ovaries to the uterus. This is where fertilization most often occurs.

**Ovaries**– the female reproductive organs that release eggs into the fallopian tubes, where they may be fertilized if sperm are present

**Ovulation** – the monthly release of a mature egg from an ovary. A woman is most fertile around the time of ovulation

**Trimester during pregnancy**– a time span of three months during pregnancy, each marked by different phases of fetal development

**First trimester** – the first 14 weeks of pregnancy

**Second trimester** – the time from 14 weeks to 26 weeks of pregnancy

**Third trimester** – the time from 26 weeks of pregnancy onwards

**Gravidity (gravid):** number of times a woman has been Pregnancy

**Parity-** refers to number of delivery

**Primigravida** = a woman pregnant for the first time

**Multigravida** = a woman who has had two or more pregnancies (2-4)

**Grand multigravida**: more than 5 pregnancies

**Nullipara =** a woman who has not given birth

**Abortion (Miscarriage)** termination of pregnancy before 24wks

**Labour (delivery or child birth):-** is described as the process by which the fetus, placenta and membranes are expelled through the birth canal.

**Contraction** – the often strong and painful tightening of the uterus during labour that causes the woman’s cervix to dilate and that helps push the baby through the birth canal.

[**HCG (human chorionic gonadotropic)**](https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/hcg-levels) is a hormone produced by the placenta. If you are pregnant, this hormone will be found in your urine or blood.

**Embryo** – the name given to a fertilized egg from the time of conception until the eighth week.

**Fetus**: Medical name for the baby before it’s born.

**Newborn** – a baby between birth and four weeks old

**Neonate** – a newborn baby, up to four weeks of age

**Fetal heart (FH):**  means the baby’s heartbeat has been heard.

**Fetal Movement (FM):**means the baby had been felt to movement

**Umbilical cord** – the cord that connects the baby to the placenta, allowing nutrients (vitamins and minerals) and oxygen to be carried from the woman to her baby

**Apgar score**– a test given one minute after a baby is born, then again five minutes later, that assesses a baby’s **a**ppearance (skin colour), **p**ulse, **g**rimace (reflex), **a**ctivity (muscle tone) and **r**espiration. A perfect Apgar score is 10; typical Apgar scores are seven, eight or nine. A score lower than seven means that the baby might need help breathing

**Meconium** – a tar-like substance passed by a baby as their first poo. Passing meconium before birth may be a sign of fetal distress

**Neonatal Intensive Care Unit** (NICU) – a unit in the hospital for babies who need a high level of special medical care

**Low birth weight** – when a baby weighs less than 2,500 grams at birth

**Stillbirth**– the death of a baby after 20 weeks’ gestation until birth

**Quickening:** The first movements of the baby that the mother feels

**Term:** This used to describe the period of time at the end of a pregnancy when a baby might be expected to be born. It is 37-42 weeks which is the normal duration of a human pregnancy.

**Full term**: 38-40weeks

**Premature** – when a baby is born before 37 weeks gestation

**Post term (postdate):** extends to 42weeks of pregnancy.

**Placenta** – the organ that connects to the wall of the uterus that nourishes the baby through the umbilical cord.

**Placental abruption:** Premature separation of the placenta from the uterine wall.

**Placenta Praevia:** When the placenta is low down. Sometimes it covers the cervix and blocks the baby’s exit, in which case you would need a Caesarean section.

**Caesarean section** – a surgical procedure in which a baby is delivered through a cut in the abdomen and uterus (also called a ‘C-section’)

**Breech presentation (BR):** This means your baby is lying bottom or feet down in the uterus.

**Episiotomy:** A cut made in the mother’s perineum (the area between the vagina and anus) to allow the baby to be born more quickly and prevent tearing.

**Morning sickness** – nausea, vomiting and aversions to certain foods and smells that affect most pregnant women to some degree. Morning sickness can occur at any time of day, usually begins at four to eight weeks gestation and generally subsides by week 16 of the pregnancy.

[**Hyperemesis gravidarum**](https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/severe-vomiting-during-pregnancy-hyperemesis-gravidarum)**-** is a complication of pregnancy in which sufferers experience severe nausea and vomiting.

**Gestational age (GA):**  measured from the first day of your last menstrual period.

**Hemorrhage:** Sudden and severe bleeding. In pregnancy it is usually called ante partum haemorrhage and after the birth it is called postpartum haemorrhage.

**Lochia:**For a couple of weeks or more after the birth the woman loses a mixture of blood and mucus through the vagina, like a very heavy period at first but lessening over time.

**Postpartum hemorrhage** – when a woman loses more than 500 ml of blood after birth.

**Folic acid**– a B vitamin found naturally in green leafy vegetables that helps prevent anemia and has been shown to reduce the incidence of some birth defects including spina bifida (see definition below)

**Spina bifida** – a birth defect that occurs during the first month of pregnancy when a baby’s backbone does not fully close, leaving part of the spinal cord exposed. Spina bifida cannot be cured, but a range of treatments and management options is available

**Oxytocin (pitocine):**The hormone secreted by women when they are in labor which stimulates labor contractions.

**Amniotic sac** – the sac around the baby inside the uterus.

**Amniotic fluid (liquor)** – the liquid that surrounds a baby in the uterus (also called ‘waters’)

**Polyhydramnios:** An excessive amount of amniotic fluid.

**Oligohydramnios:** decreaseamount of amniotic fluid

**Position:** How the baby is lying, for example to the right

**Presentation:**The part of the baby which is coming first (usually the crown or back of the baby’s head).

**Postpartum:**Relating to the period of a few days after the birth.

**Pregnancy Induced Hypertension (PIH):** This means that your blood pressure is high a result of the pregnancy.