

Reproductive Care Glossary

A Patient Healthcare Guide for Medical Terms



About the Glossary

Making Medicine Accessible for All

This glossary was created to help patients better understand common terms related to reproductive health, contraception, and ovarian cancer prevention. Every definition is written in plain language, with easy-to-read pronunciation guides, to support people of all literacy levels and backgrounds. Our goal is to make complex medical information clearer, so patients feel confident asking questions, making decisions, and advocating for their reproductive health care.

ACOG

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists | [organization]

A professional group of doctors and health experts that sets medical guidelines for women’s health care. This includes reproductive and obstetric care.

Birth Control

/birth kuhn-troll/ | [concept]

Methods or devices used to prevent pregnancy. These include hormonal options (such as pills, patches, injections, or implants), barrier methods (like condoms or diaphragms), intrauterine devices (IUDs), and surgical sterilization.

Bilateral

/bye-lat-er-ull/ | [anatomy]

A term meaning “both sides” of the body or an organ.

Cervical Cap

/sur-vi-kull kap/ | [birth control method]

A small, flexible cup placed over the cervix to block sperm from entering the uterus. It is often used with spermicide for better success.

Cervix

/sur-viks/ | [anatomy]

The lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. It helps keep the baby in place during pregnancy, and opens during childbirth.

Combined Oral Contraceptive

/kuhm-bind or-uhl kon-truh-sep-tiv/ | [birth control method]

A birth control pill that has two hormones, estrogen and progestin. This prevents pregnancy by stopping ovulation and thickening cervical mucus.

Consent

/kuhn-sent/ | [concept]

A voluntary and informed agreement to join in an activity or have a medical procedure.

Contraceptive

/kon-truh-sep-tiv/ | [birth control method]

Any method used to prevent pregnancy. This includes pills, IUDs, sterilization procedures, and barrier methods like condoms.

Copper IUD

/kop-er eye-you-dee/ | [birth control method]

A small, T-shaped device placed in the uterus that releases copper to prevent pregnancy. This makes it difficult for sperm to survive. It does not have hormones and lasts for 8–10 years.

Diaphragm

/die-uh-fram/ | [birth control method]

A soft, flexible dome inserted into the vagina to cover the cervix and block sperm. It must be used with spermicide to be effective.

Ejaculation

/e-jak-you-lay-shun/ | [anatomy]

When semen (fluid that has sperm in it) comes out of the penis during orgasm. This is how sperm leaves the body. It can cause pregnancy if it reaches an egg.

Estrogen

/ess-truh-jen/ | [anatomy]

A hormone mainly produced by the ovaries. This helps regulate the menstrual cycle, supports bone health, and affects skin and cholesterol levels.

External Condom

/eks-ter-nuhl kon-dum/ | [birth control method]

A thin sheath worn over the penis during sex to prevent pregnancy. Condoms also reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Fallopian Tubes

/fuh-loh-pee-uhn toobz/ | [anatomy]

Thin tubes that connect the ovaries to the uterus. This is where an egg meets sperm and fertilization usually happens. Most ovarian cancers start in the fallopian tubes.

Fertility Awareness

/fer-til-uh-tee uh-wear-nuss/ | [birth control method]

A method of tracking menstrual cycles to determine fertile days for pregnancy planning or prevention. Used by monitoring body temperature, cervical mucus, and cycle length.

Hormonal IUD

/hor-moan-uhl eye-you-dee/ | [birth control method]

A small, T-shaped device placed in the uterus that releases hormones to prevent pregnancy. It can last 3 to 8 years. the amount of time depends on the type.

Implant

/im-plant/ | [birth control method]

A small, flexible rod inserted under the skin of the arm that releases hormones to prevent pregnancy for up to three years.

Injection

/in-jek-shun/ | [birth control method]

A shot of hormones, usually progestin, given every three months to stop ovulation and thicken cervical mucus to prevent pregnancy.

Internal Condom

/in-ter-null kon-dum/ | [birth control method]

A pouch inserted into the vagina before sex to block sperm and provide STI protection.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

/in vee-troh fer-til-eye-zay-shun/ | [procedure]

A procedure where an egg is fertilized outside the body. It is then placed in the uterus to help with pregnancy.

Ovarian Cancer

/oh-vair-ee-uhn can-ser/ | [anatomy]

A type of cancer that usually starts in the fallopian tubes and can spread to other parts of the body.

Ovaries

/oh-vuh-reez/ | [anatomy]

Two small organs in the female reproductive system that produce eggs and hormones like estrogen and progesterone.

Ovulation

/ov-yoo-lay-shun/ | [anatomy]

The release of an egg from the ovary. This usually happens once during each menstrual cycle. This is when pregnancy can happen if the egg meets sperm.

Patient Autonomy

/pay-shunt aw-tawn-uh-me/ | [concept]

The right of patients to make informed choices about their health care.

Permanent Contraception

/pur-muh-nunt kon-truh-sep-shun/ | [birth control method]

A lifelong method of preventing pregnancy. This includes a tubal ligation, salpingectomy, or vasectomy.

Plan B: Emergency Contraception

/e-mur-juhn-see kon-truh-sep-shun/ | [birth control method]

A pill taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy. A different emergency pill, ella, works up to five days after unprotected sex.

Progesterone

/proh-jes-ter-ohn/ | [anatomy]

A hormone that helps control the menstrual cycle and supports pregnancy by keeping the uterine lining healthy.

Progestin

/proh-jes-tin/ | [anatomy]

A synthetic (man - made) form of progesterone used in a variety of hormonal birth control methods.

Progestin-Only Pill

/proh-jes-tin ohn-lee pill/ | [birth control method]

A birth control pill that has only progestin and does not have estrogen. It is sometimes called the "mini-pill."

Reversible

/ree-vur-suh-bull/ | [concept]

A method of birth control that can be stopped. This allows fertility to return. Examples are IUDs or birth control pills.

Risk Reduction

/risk ree-duck-shun/ | [procedure]

Actions taken to lower the chances of developing a disease. This can include having a salpingectomy to reduce ovarian cancer risk.

Salpingectomy

/sal-pin-jek-toh-mee/ | [procedure], [birth control method]

Surgical removal of one or both fallopian tubes. It is permanent and also reduces ovarian cancer risk.

Spermicide

/spur-muh-side/ | [birth control method]

A chemical that kills sperm. It is used in gels, foams, or suppositories. These are often used with condoms for extra protection.

Surgical Consent

/sur-jih-kuhl kon-sent/ | [concept]

The process of informing a patient about a surgery. This includes its purpose, risks, and alternatives, before getting their agreement.

Surgical Sterilization

/sur-jih-kuhl steh-rih-luh-zay-shun/ | [procedure], [birth control method]

A permanent birth control method that involves surgery to prevent pregnancy. This can include tubal ligation, salpingectomy, or vasectomy.

Tubal Ligation

/too-bull lie-gay-shun/ | [procedure], [birth control method]

A surgery that blocks or interrupts the fallopian tubes to prevent pregnancy. It is permanent and does not reduce ovarian cancer risk.

Uterus

/you-tuh-ruhs/ | [anatomy]

A pear-shaped organ where a fertilized egg attaches and grows during pregnancy. It is located in the lower abdomen between the bladder and rectum.

Vagina

/vuh-jy-nuh/ | [anatomy]

A muscular canal that connects the outside of the body to the uterus. It is the pathway for menstrual blood, sex, and childbirth.

Vaginal Ring

/vadj-uh-nuhl ring/ | [birth control method]

A small, flexible ring inserted into the vagina that releases hormones to prevent pregnancy. It is replaced every three weeks.

Vasectomy

/vah-sek-tuh-mee/ | [procedure], [birth control method]

A permanent birth control surgery for men that blocks sperm from being released during ejaculation.

