

Glossary of Terms

Abdomen - Front & lateral surface of the torso between the rib cage and pelvis

Abdominal - Below the rib cage, above the pelvis, cavity below the respiratory diaphragm, above the pelvic cavity; the organs within that cavity and the superficial muscles surrounding the cavity

Abduction - An action that pulls away from the midline of the body i.e. lifting arms out to the side

Adduction - To draw towards the midline of the body i.e. bringing the knees together

Aerobic - Requiring oxygen.

Aerobic fitness - An activity that is long in duration, moderate in intensity, expends muscular energy i.e. uses oxygen. Walking, jogging and running through water; synonymous with aerobic endurance.

Antagonist - The muscle that acts in the opposite direction of the muscle being used, i.e. quadriceps are the antagonists of the hamstrings.

Anatomy - The study of bodily structure; skeleton; the structural makeup of an organism or any of its parts

Anemia/Iron Deficiency - Anemia is caused when blood does not have enough healthy blood cells to carry oxygen to tissues and to a fetus. Untreated anemia can cause weakness, fatigue and serious complications such as preterm labour.

Amniotic fluid - The protective liquid, consisting mostly of water, that surrounds the baby inside the amniotic sac within the uterus.

Anterior presentation - Refers to the position of the crown of the baby's head in relation to the pregnant woman's body. Anterior is toward the front. The baby's spine is against the mother's belly button and the baby is looking at her spine. Good position for birth.

APGAR score - An assessment of a newborn's early response to the stress of birth and life outside the womb performed at one minute and at five minutes after birth.

Areola - The flat pigmented area encircling the nipple of the breast.

Asthma - A lung condition that causes the air passages to become narrowed as a result of muscular spasms and swelling of the air passage walls.

Attachment parenting - Originally coined by pediatrician William Sears, attachment parenting encourages close physical contact between a baby and mother until the child is ready to become more independent.

Baby blues - The term used to describe the mild depression that can occur after having a baby. Sometimes called the postpartum blues, this type of depression tends to last only a few days and typically occurs within

one to two weeks of the birth. If the feelings of depression last longer than this or are particularly severe, the mother may be suffering from postpartum depression.

Bilirubin - A substance that is released as a newborn baby's body attempts to get rid of some of the excess red blood cells that he/she was born with.

Bone - The hard connective tissue forming the structures of the skeleton

Braxton Hicks - Named after British doctor, John Braxton Hicks, who first described them in 1872: irregular painless contractions felt during the last half of pregnancy. The abdomen feels tight or hard and the sensation typically lasts for 45 seconds or less.

Breast engorgement - When the breasts become swollen and full of milk.

Breech presentation - When the baby is positioned buttocks or feet down rather than head down. In Canada, breech deliveries are done by Caesarian section.

Cadence - rhythmic, balanced flow of movement, as in marching.

Caesarean section - A surgical procedure used to deliver a baby via an incision made in the mother's abdomen and uterus.

Cafe au lait marks - Permanent tan-coloured pigment patches. Can appear at birth or any point during the first two years of life.

Calisthenics - Exercises to develop strength and grace.

Cardiovascular cool-down - Movement which allows the cardiovascular system to adjust gradually to decreasing exercise demands.

Cardiovascular endurance - Exercise which conditions and improves the efficiency of the heart and lungs, and the ability of the body to meet the demands for oxygen.

Cartilage - One type of connective tissues with a strong and rubbery characteristic.

Circuit training - The combination of strength and endurance exercises.

Circulatory warm-up - Preparing the body for vigorous with continuous and rhythmic movements.

Circumcision - Surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis.

Cervix - The entrance to the uterus.

Cleft lip - A congenital condition in which there is a separation of the upper lip that can extend into the nose.

Cleft palate - The roof of the mouth is incompletely formed.

Clubfoot - One or both feet are turned down and inward or up and outward.

Coccyx - The tail bone - lowest segment of the spine composed of a few tiny bones.

Colostrum - The first substance secreted from the breasts following childbirth. High in protein and antibodies.

Concentric muscle contraction - Occurs when the muscle shortens, as the back muscles do when lifting a weight from the floor. Water exercises are primarily concentric movements because muscle fibres are shortened against resistance.

Connective tissue - One of the four primary tissues: includes loose connective tissue, fascia, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, bone and blood

Contraction - Part of the process of childbirth, a tightening or 'contracting' of the uterine muscles causing changes in the cervix. Contractions become longer, stronger and closer together as labour intensifies.

Core strength/stability - "Core" refers to the deep layers of abdominal and pelvic muscles. 'Stability' refers to efficient joint movement.

Co-sleeping - Term refers to parents sleeping within close vicinity of the baby; this can be sharing a bed, or the baby in a bassinet (for example) within within the parents room.

Cradle cap - A yellowish, scaly buildup on the baby's head that may also be accompanied by redness in the skin creases.

Diaphragm - Respiratory diaphragm is a wall of muscle and connective tissue separating the thoracic and abdominal cavities, between the stomach and the lungs.

Diastasis recti abdominis - Separation of the longitudinal abdominal muscles

Dilation - A measure of how wide the cervix has opened up prior to or during labour. Cervical dilation is measured in centimetres from 0-10. At 10 cm, a pregnant woman is fully dilated and ready to push out her baby.

Doppler (doptone) - A hand-held device that uses ultrasound technology to monitor the fetal heart rate, often used by midwives.

Doula – Emotionally, physically and informationally supports an expectant woman and her family, during pregnancy, during labour and the postpartum period.

Due date - The projected day the fetus reaches full term and the woman will labour.

Eczema - An inflammatory condition of the skin accompanied by itching.

Effacement - The thinning of the cervix before and during labour. Precedes and accompanies dilation.

When the cervix is fully effaced, it is paper thin.

Ectopic pregnancy - A pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus, most often in the fallopian tube.

Edema - The accumulation of fluid in the body's tissues, resulting in swelling.

Elasticity - In a muscle, a property that allows it to be stretched.

Electronic fetal monitoring - An electronic instrument used to record the heartbeat of the fetus as well as the mother's uterine contractions. Fetal monitors can be either external (placed on the abdomen) or internal (attached to the baby's scalp via the vagina).

Embryo - The term used to describe the early stages of fetal growth, from conception through the third month of pregnancy.

Endometriosis - Presence of endometrial tissue (the uterine lining) in abnormal locations such as the ovaries and the fallopian tubes. May cause painful menstruation and infertility.

Endorphins - Chemicals in the brain, resembling opiates, which are released in response to stress or strenuous physical activity and result in pain reduction and a natural "high".

Engagement - When baby's presenting part (usually the head) settles into the pelvic cavity.

Engorgement - Congested or filled with fluid. In breastfeeding the term refers to the fullness or swelling of the breasts, which can occur between the second and seventh postpartum day when a woman's breasts first start to produce milk.

Epidural - A local anesthetic that is injected into the epidural space outside the spinal cord. The most popular form of pain relief medication during labour and for Caesarean sections.

Episiotomy - A small incision made into the skin and the perineal muscle at the time of delivery to enlarge the vaginal opening making it easier for the baby's head or body to emerge or to insert birthing instruments such as forceps.

Estrogen - A group of hormones that are produced in the ovaries and that work with progesterone to regulate the reproductive cycle. Estrogen is produced in all phases of the cycle, whether or not there is ovulation.

Exercise - Engaged in planned, structured and repetitive bodily movement to improve or maintain one or more components of physical fitness.

External version - A procedure in which the caregiver turns the baby (or babies) in the uterus by applying manual pressure to the outside of the mother's abdomen, usually performed to turn a breech baby before 34 weeks.

Extension - A movement of unfolding or straightening from a flexed position in which the bones move farther apart; opposite of flexion.

Extensor muscles - Muscles used to extend or unfold the joints of upper and lower extremities; antagonist to flexors

Fallopian tubes - The long, narrow tubes that carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus.

False labour - Experiencing regular and/or painful contractions that neither dilate nor thin the cervix.

Fascia - Sheets of connective tissue made up of fibres and cells that support and give form to organs and muscles

Ferberize - Teaching the baby to sleep through the night by following the controversial methods made popular by Richard Ferber, M.D.

Fetus - The medical term used to describe the developing baby from the end of the third month of pregnancy until birth.

Fibroid tumour - A benign tumour of fibrous tissue that may occur in the uterine wall. It may be asymptomatic or it may cause abnormal menstrual patterns, abdominal pressure infertility problems, and recurrent miscarriage.

Flexibility - Allows muscles to stretch and joints to go through normal ranges of motion.

Flexion - Drawing bones joined by a joint, closer together.

Fontanel - The two so-called "soft spots" that can be found in the centre and toward the back of a newborn baby's head.

Forceps - A tong-like instrument that may be placed around the baby's head to help guide it out of the birth canal during a vaginal delivery.

Foremilk - Breast milk produced at the beginning of a feeding. High in water and sugar.

Fundal height - The distance from the upper, rounded part of a pregnant woman's uterus to her pubic bone. On average, the measurement is equal to the number of weeks of gestation.

Genetic screening - Screening tests designed to indicate increased risk of passing along an inherited trait or disease to the baby.

Gestational diabetes - Diabetes that is triggered by pregnancy, typically occurs after the 24th week of pregnancy. Prenatal screening tests detect higher levels of glucose in blood samples. Gestational diabetes is often treated with exercise and diet and/or insulin. Untreated gestational diabetes puts a mother at increased risk for a large baby, caesarean section and pre-eclampsia.

Gland - An organ in the body that will produce substances, like hormones.

Glucose tolerance test - A blood test used to detect gestational diabetes. Blood is drawn at specified intervals after the pregnant woman drinks a sugary beverage.

Group B strep - Bacteria found in approximately 15% of pregnant women. Women who test positive for group B strep may require antibiotics during labour to protect their babies from picking up this potentially life-threatening infection.

Hemorrhoids - Swollen blood vessels around the anus or in the rectal canal which may bleed and cause pain, especially after childbirth.

Hindmilk - Breast-milk that is produced part way through a feeding. High in fats and calories.

Hydrotherapy - Use of water in the treatment of disease or injury.

Hyperextension - Extension beyond normal range of mobility

Hypertension - (PIH or pregnancy induced hypertension) High blood pressure often causing symptoms such as swelling, changes in vision, headache, weight gain. There would not be protein in the urine, as there would be with pre-eclampsia.

Hyperventilation - Shallow over-breathing, elevating blood oxygen levels and lowering levels of blood carbon dioxide

Hypoventilation - Under-breathing, lowering blood oxygen levels and creating high levels of blood carbon dioxide

Hypoglycemia - Low blood sugar.

Ilium - One of three segments (ilium, ischium, pubis) of the hipbone; the large wing-shaped portion that connects to the sacrum to complete the pelvic bowl

Infertility - The inability to contribute biologically to conception.

Intercostal nerve - Branches of spinal nerves supplying intercostal muscles and abdominal muscles

Internal version - The act of adjusting a baby's position in the uterus by placing one hand in the mother's vagina and the other on her abdomen.

Intensity - The rate or degree of vigour with which an exercise is performed.

Interval training - A workout that alternates between high and low intensity

Intrauterine growth restriction - (IUGR) is a condition where a baby's growth slows or ceases when it is in the uterus.

In vitro fertilization - A procedure wherein a number of ova are removed from the ovary and fertilized by sperm outside of the body. The resulting embryos are transferred to the mother's uterus for gestation.

Incompetent cervix - A condition that occurs when weak cervical tissue causes or contributes to premature dilation, birth or the loss of an otherwise healthy pregnancy.

Isometric contraction - Achieving muscular tension without movement using counter exertion: pressing against an unmoving source.

Joints - Occur wherever two or more bones come into close contact, allowing them to move. 3 types: synovial (free moving), partially movable and immovable.

Kangaroo care - Skin-to-skin- contact between parent and baby.

Kegels - Exercises for the muscles of the pelvic floor.

Labour - The process of childbirth, including the dilation of the cervix and the delivery of the baby and the placenta.

Lactation consultant - A health-care professional who is an expert on breastfeeding.

Lanugo - Soft, downy hair that covers parts of a newborn baby's body.

Let-down reflex - A reflex triggered by the hormone oxytocin, that causes the band-like muscles around the milk-production cells of a mother's breast to contract, forcing the milk through the inner canal system and into the nipples, where it can be obtained by the baby.

Lightening - A change in the shape of the uterus a few weeks before labour allowing the baby to move down into the pelvis.

Linea nigra - A dark line running from navel to the pubic area that may develop during pregnancy and disappears in the early postpartum months.

Lochia - The discharge of blood, mucus, and tissue from the uterus following childbirth. Lochia can last anywhere from a few weeks to six weeks or longer

Lordosis - Anterior convex curvature of the spinal column; excessive lumbar curvature that develops in lower back

Low birth weight - Babies who weigh less than five pounds 8 ounces (2,500 grams) at birth.

Lumbar - Lower back, made up of five vertebrae and five bilateral lumbar nerves

Mask of pregnancy (chloasma) - Extensive brown pigment patches of irregular shape and size on the face or other parts of the body that can occur during pregnancy.

Mastitis - A painful breast infection characterized by fever, soreness, and swelling.

Maternal serum screening - A blood sample screening test used to determine the probability that a particular woman is carrying a fetus with certain types of abnormalities.

Meconium - The thick blackish substance that fills a baby's intestine in utero and is discharged shortly after birth.

Milia - Tiny white bumps that resemble whiteheads typically found on a newborn baby's nose, forehead, and cheeks.

Miscarriage - Spontaneous loss of the fetus or embryo from the womb, usually during the first trimester of pregnancy, but at any point prior to the 20th week of pregnancy.

Mongolian spots - Greenish or bluish birthmarks that are caused by temporary accumulations of pigment under the skin.

Moro reflex/startle reflex - A newborn baby's instinctive reaction to any loud noise or sudden movement. Baby will arch the back, throw open arms and legs and may start to cry.

Mucus plug - The plug of thick and sticky mucus that blocks the cervical canal during pregnancy, protecting the baby from infection.

Multigravida - A woman pregnant for the second or subsequent time.

Multipara - A woman who has given birth one or more times before her current pregnancy.

Muscular endurance - Ability of a muscle to exert a force repeatedly over a period of time.

Muscular strength - The amount of force that can be exerted by a muscle or muscle group.

Neonatal death - The death of a liveborn infant between birth and four weeks of age.

Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) - An intensive care unit that specializes in the care of premature, low-weight babies and seriously ill infants.

Neural tube defects - Abnormalities in the development of the spinal cord and brain in a fetus, including anencephaly, hydrocephalus, and spina bifida.

Newborn acne - Neonatal urticaria is red spots with yellowish centres that form because a baby's skin and pores are not working efficiently. Appears a few weeks after birth and disappears on its own.

Newborn jaundice - The yellowish tinge of a newborn's skin caused by too much bilirubin in the blood. Jaundice typically develops on the second or third day of life and lasts up to 2 weeks.

Non-stress test - A non-invasive test in which fetal movements are monitored and recorded using an electronic fetal monitor, assessing changes in fetal heart rate.

Occipital - The back part of the head or skull.

Ovaries - The female sexual glands responsible for producing estrogen and progesterone and for housing the developing egg prior to its release at ovulation. There are two ovaries-- one on either side of the pelvis.

Ovulation - The point in the menstrual cycle in which a mature egg is released from the ovaries into the fallopian tubes.

Ovum - The egg cell produced in the ovaries each month.

Oxytocin - The naturally occurring hormone that causes uterine contractions. A synthetic form of this hormone (Pitocin) is used to induce or augment labour.

Pelvic or hip-bone - A single bone on each side of the body which, together with the ilium, ischium, and sacrum, forms the pelvic bowl

Pelvis - The bowl like cavity in the lower part of the body formed by the ilium, ischium, sacrum and pubis

Pelvic floor muscles - The group of muscles at the base of the pelvis that help support the bladder, uterus, urethra, vagina, and rectum.

Perineum - The muscle and tissue located between the vagina and the rectum.

Physiology - The study of bodily functions as distinct from anatomy

Pituitary Gland - Located at the base of the human, brain this gland is responsible for all hormonal functions of the body.

Placenta - The organ that develops in the uterus during pregnancy, providing nutrients for the fetus and eliminating its waste products.

Placental abruption - The premature separation of the placenta from the wall of the uterus during labour.

Placental infarction - The death of part of the placenta caused by a loss of blood supply which could cause stillbirth.

Placenta previa - A condition in which the placenta partially or completely blocks the cervical opening. It necessitates delivery by Caesarean section and can be associated with pregnancy loss and massive hemorrhaging.

Postpartum blues - The term used to describe the mild depression that can occur after having a baby. (see Baby Blues)

Postpartum depression (PPD) - Clinical depression that can occur at any point during the year following childbirth. It is characterized by sadness, impatience, restlessness, and--in particularly severe cases--an inability to care for the baby. Severe cases in which the mother suffers hallucinations or a desire to hurt the baby are classified as **postpartum psychosis**.

Postpartum doula - A caregiver who provides hands-on assistance to new parents during the early days postpartum.

Postpartum hemorrhage - The loss of more than 15 ounces (450 ml) of blood during a vaginal delivery or 1000ml during a Caesarean section.

Posterior presentation - A term that refers to the position of the crown of the baby's head in relation to the pregnant woman's body. The baby's head is toward the mother's back. The baby's spine is against the

mother's spine and the baby is facing the mother's belly button.

Pre-eclampsia/toxemia - A serious condition causing blood vessels to constrict, the most common symptom is elevated blood pressure and/or protein in urine, it is most common after 37 weeks gestation. Pre-eclampsia can be life threatening if not treated.

Some women with preeclampsia develop a condition called HELLP syndrome. HELLP stands for Hemolysis, the breakdown of red blood cells; Elevated Liver enzymes; and Low Platelets, the blood cells that are necessary for clotting.

Pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) - A pregnancy-related condition in which a woman's blood pressure is temporarily elevated. Her blood pressure returns to normal shortly after she gives birth.

Premature baby - A baby born before 37 completed weeks of gestation.

Premature rupture of the membranes - When the membranes rupture before the onset of labour.

Preterm birth - A birth that occurs two weeks before the baby was due and that results in an infant that weighs less than five pounds eight ounces (2,500 grams).

Primigravida - Pregnant for the first time.

Primipara - Giving birth for the first time.

Prolactin - The hormone responsible for milk production and for suppressing ovulation in a nursing mother. Prolactin is released following the delivery of the placenta.

Pronation - Rotation of the wrist and hand with reference to the elbow; opposite of supination

Protagonist - The muscle being used in the opposite direction of the antagonist muscle (the triceps are the antagonists of the biceps).

Pubic bone - One of the three sections of the hipbone; together the two pubic bones form the front of the pelvis

Pubic symphysis - A fibro-cartilaginous joint that is the site of union of the two pelvic bones

Pulmonary - Having to do with lungs

Pulmonary circulation - The circuit of blood from the heart (ventricle) to the lungs and back to the heart (aorta); counterpart to systemic circulation

Quickening - The term used to describe the moment when a pregnant woman first detects fetal movement (typically between the 20th and 24th weeks for a first baby and between the 16th and 20th week of pregnancy for a second or subsequent babies).

Radius - One of the two bones of the forearm

Rectus - Straight; applied here to the side-by-side, straight up-down abdominal muscles

Resistance - Force exerted against movement.

Rh antibodies - Antibodies capable of crossing the placenta and destroying the baby's red blood cells.

Ruptured membranes - The loss of fluid from the amniotic sac.

Rooting reflex - A newborn baby's instinctive ability to search for a nipple to latch on to if the mouth is touched or the cheek is stroked on one side.

Sacral - the posterior convex sacral has five bilateral sacral nerves

Sacrum - The lower most major segment of the spine, articulates with the ilium on each side at the sacroiliac joints

Separation anxiety - A baby's fear of being separated from the person or persons he/she cares most about.

Sciatica - Pain in the leg, lower back, and buttock caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve.

Sciatic nerve - The largest nerve of the lumbosacral plexus; its two large branches are the tibial nerve, which supplies the calf muscles and the peroneal nerve, which supplies the muscles on the anterior side of the leg

Sensory - Conscious or unconscious input from the body to the central nervous system

Sitting bones (ischial tuberosities) - Ischium; one of the three components of the pelvic bone

Spina bifida - A congenital birth defect that occurs when the tube housing the central nervous system fails to close completely. It can result in malformations of the spinal cord or brain.

Spinal anesthesia - A regional anesthetic that is injected into the spinal fluid. Generally used for Caesarean sections.

Spinal cord - Part of the central nervous system that extends from the brainstem into the vertebral canal including twelve thoracic segments, five lumbar segments, five sacral segments and one coccygeal segment

Static stretching - A method of stretching in which a position is held for approximately 15 to 30 seconds

Station - In labour, an estimate of the baby's progress in descending into the pelvis.

Stillbirth - A fetal death that occurs after the 20th week of gestation.

Stork bites - Pinkish, irregularly shaped patches that are typically found at the nape of the neck or on the forehead, although they can also be found on other parts of the body.

Strawberry hemangioma - Raised reddish blue birthmarks that occur when an area of the skin develops an abnormal blood supply.

Stress test - A test that records the fetal heart rate in response to induced mild contractions of the uterus.

Stretching - Works muscles or muscle groups by progressively increasing resistance to the point of momentary muscle fatigue.

Stretch marks - Reddish streaks on the skin of the breasts, abdomen, legs, and buttocks that are caused by the skin stretching during pregnancy.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) - The sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant under one year of age that remains unexplained after all known and possible causes have been ruled out

Supination - Rotation of the wrist and hand with reference to the elbow, opposite of pronation

Synovial fluid - Protective fluid that lubricates the synovial joints, facilitating smooth and easy movement of the articulating cartilage

Synovial joint - Movable joint with articulating cartilage on the ends of the long bones to contact one another in the joint protecting the surfaces with synovial fluid

Thermal regulation - Maintenance of the core body temperature by establishing a balance between metabolic heat production and heat loss.

Thoracic - Having to do with the thorax (chest) containing heart, lungs, ribs and sternum

Thrush - A breastfeeding-related yeast infection that affects both mother and baby.

Tongue-tied - A condition that occurs when the stringy, fibrous membrane that connects the lower part of the tongue to the floor of the mouth may be too tight to allow the baby's tongue to extend far enough forward to take hold of the nipple during breastfeeding.

Transition - The third or final phase of the first stage of labour when the cervix dilates from seven to 10 centimetres. When transition ends, the pushing stage begins.

Transverse lie - When the fetus is lying horizontally across the uterus rather than in a vertical position

Tubal ligation - A permanent sterilization procedure that involves blocking off a woman's fallopian tubes to prevent conception.

Tubal pregnancy (ectopic pregnancy) - A pregnancy that occurs in the fallopian tube.

Vacuum extraction - A process in which a suction cup attached to a vacuum pump is inserted in the vagina and placed on a baby's head to aid in delivery.

Varicose veins - Abnormally swollen veins, usually in the legs.

Vena cava - Returns deoxygenated blood to the heart for transport to the lungs.

Vernix caseosa - A greasy white substance that coats and protects the baby's skin in utero

Vertebra - The bony units of the vertebral column, or the spine. There are seven cervical vertebrae (C1-7), twelve thoracic vertebrae (T1-12), five lumbar vertebrae (L1-5), a single fused sacrum with five segments (S1-5), and a rudimentary coccyx

Valsalva maneuver - Holding the breath during exertion. Use in exercise and to clear blocked ears.

Ultrasound - A technique that uses high-frequency sound waves to create a moving image, or sonogram, on a television screen.

Umbilical cord - The cord that connects the placenta to the fetus in the uterus

Uterus - The hollow muscular organ that protects and nourishes the fetus prior to birth.

Zygote - A cell formed by the union of egg and sperm.