Glossary

**Acrosome**
This is a membrane-bound cap-like structure found at the head of the sperm. It contains enzymes that are thought to help the sperm penetrate the egg.

**Adenomyosis**
Similar to endometriosis in that endometrial tissue invades the muscle of the uterine wall. It may cause pain and heavy menstrual bleeding.

**Adhesion**
Bands of scar tissue that bind organs (i.e. uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, bowel) to each other or to the abdominal wall. Typically result from previous infections, endometriosis or surgery.

**AH (assisted hatching)**
A procedure in which the outer layer of the embryo is partially opened, usually by laser or application of an acid, to assist in the implantation of the embryo.

**AI (artificial insemination)**
A clinical procedure where sperm is deposited inside the uterus, cervix or vagina.

**AI/D (artificial insemination by donor)**
A clinical procedure where donor sperm is deposited inside the uterus, cervix or vagina.

**Amenorrhea**
Medical term meaning the absence of a menstrual period.

**Androgens**
Hormones that are produced by the testes of the male and in small amounts by the ovaries and adrenal glands of the female.

**Aneuploidy**
A condition in which a cell has one or more extra or missing chromosomes.

**Anovulation**
Medical term for the absence of ovulation.

**Antibody**
A protein created naturally by the body's immune system which helps to fight off bacteria and foreign substances (antigens). Each antibody recognizes a specific antigen.

**Antigen**
Substances that are recognized by the immune system and can stimulate an immuno-response.

**Anti-sperm Antibodies**
Antibodies that both men and women can develop against sperm cells, which impair sperm motility, interfere with sperm-cervical mucous interaction, and/or impact fertilization.

**ART (assisted reproductive technologies)**
Medical fertility treatments whereby the ovum and sperm cell are artificially brought together outside of the body in order to heighten the chance of pregnancy. Examples of ART procedures are IVF with or without ICSI, GIFT and ZIFT.

**Aspiration**
Extracting through suctioning. Includes procedures such as egg aspiration used for in vitro fertilization (IVF).

**Asthenospermia**
Reduced motility or vitality of sperm cells.

**Autoimmune Disease**
A disease where the body's immune system has a response against its own tissues.
Azoospermia
Condition in which there are no sperm cells present in the semen.

BABI (blastomere analysis before implantation)
A test for genetic diseases performed on a blastocyst prior to embryo transfer. BABI is helpful in detecting embryos with genetic defects and transferring the normal embryos into the uterus.

BBT (basal body temperature)
The body's temperature at the time of awakening in the morning. The temperature can be taken daily (orally is fine) and recorded on a graph to indicate if ovulation has taken place.

Beta hCG Test
A blood test used to detect very early pregnancies.

Bicornuate uterus
Medical term referring to a uterine abnormality which divides the uterus into two 'horns', giving it a 'heart' shape.

Blastocyst
The embryo at about 5 or 6 days after fertilization. It has a fluid-filled cavity, and the cells will eventually form the placenta and fetus.

Blighted Ovum
A pregnancy in which no embryo has developed in the pregnancy sac.

Breakthrough Bleeding
A type of abnormal, though light uterine bleeding.

Capacitation
A change in sperm that helps it to penetrate an egg. This change occurs after ejaculation while the sperm is in the female reproductive tract.

Cervical Cerclage
A procedure putting stitches in an “incompetent cervix” to prevent it from opening and causing a miscarriage or premature labour. Cerclage is not normally performed in the office as it typically requires anaesthesia and brief hospital stay.

Cervical Mucous
The secretion produced within the cervix through which sperm travel to fertilize an egg. The cervical mucous gets clearer and stretchier around the time of ovulation.

Cervix
The part of the uterus that extends into the vagina, permitting sperm to enter and menstrual blood to exit. It produces mucous through which sperm to travel into the uterus.

Chocolate Cyst
An ovarian cyst filled with old blood. Most commonly found when endometriosis invades the ovary, causing blood-filled cysts to develop.

Chromosome
Contains the genetic information of an individual in the form of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). Found in the nucleus of human cells.

Cilia
The hair-like fibres found on the surface of certain body cells. Cilia on cells that line the fallopian tubes help move the egg or embryo toward the uterus.

Cleavage
Cell division that changes the fertilized egg into the developing embryo.

Clomiphene Citrate
Clomiphene citrate is a drug in pill form that is used to induce ovulation in women with ovulatory dysfunction who are seeking pregnancy.

Cloning
To create a genetically identical copy by growing cells in a laboratory.

Corpus Luteum
The part of the follicle that remains in the ovary after ovulation. The corpus luteum secretes progesterone during the second half of the menstrual cycle for about 10 days if fertilization does not occur. If fertilization does occur, the corpus luteum continues to function until the placenta develops to secrete the hormones necessary to sustain the pregnancy.

Crohn’s Disease
An inflammatory bowel disease.

Cryopreservation
A freezing and storage process used to preserve embryos, sperm, eggs and other types of tissue.

Cul-de-sac (pelvic)
The space between the rectum and the uterus in females, and between the bladder and rectum in males.

D&C (dilation and curettage)
A surgical procedure that involves dilating the cervical opening to remove tissue by scraping or suctioning.
Danazol
A synthetic hormone that may be prescribed to treat endometriosis.

DES (diethylstilbestrol)
A synthetic estrogen that was prescribed in the 1950s and 1960s to prevent miscarriage and premature birth. DES caused malformations of the reproductive organs in some babies born to women who took the drug. Daughters are at an increased risk of some types of vaginal and cervical cancers.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)
The hereditary material found in the nucleus of cells.

Donor Insemination
Artificial insemination with donor sperm.

Dyspareunia
Painful or difficult intercourse.

Ectopic Pregnancy
Pregnancy located outside of the uterus, most commonly in a fallopian tube.

Egg
The female reproductive cell. Also called an ovum.

Egg Donation
Donation of an egg from one woman to another for the purpose of becoming pregnant by in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Egg Retrieval
A procedure used to remove eggs from the ovaries' follicles for use for in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Ejaculate
The seminal fluid released at orgasm.

Electroejaculation
Electrical stimulation to induce ejaculation in a man with spinal injuries or other conditions that prevent normal ejaculation. The ejaculate is collected for use in intrauterine insemination (IUI) or in vitro fertilization (IVF).

EMB (endometrial biopsy)
A test to remove a tissue sample of the lining of the uterus for microscopic study. This test is performed to determine whether the lining is responding properly to progesterone during the second half of the menstrual cycle. The sample is typically obtained on day 26 of a 28-day cycle.

Embryo
The early stage of a baby's development from implantation to the second month of pregnancy.

Embryo Transfer
Placement of one or more embryos into the uterus of a woman as part of the IVF process.

Embryologist
An expert who specializes in embryology, the science of the development of the embryo.

Endometriosis
Growth of endometrial tissue outside of its normal location in the uterus. The cause of endometriosis is still uncertain. The condition may cause pain, inflammation, and scar tissue (adhesions). Infertility may result from endometriosis.

Endometritis
Inflammation of the endometrium.

Endometrium
The lining of the uterus, shed each month during menstruation.

Epididymitis
Inflammation of the epididymis, the tube that connects the testes to the vas deferens. May be a cause of male infertility.

Estradiol
The main form of estrogen produced by the ovary. Estradiol concentrations in the blood are often measured during treatment cycles.

Estrogen
One of the female sex hormones. It signals for the uterine lining to thicken during the first half of the menstrual cycle in preparation for possible pregnancy.

Fallopian Tubes
These tubes extend from the uterus and are necessary for natural fertilization. They pick up the egg from the ovary and facilitate its travel to the uterus. Fertilization occurs in the fallopian tube.

Fertilization
The successful union of the sperm and egg to form a zygote.

Fetus
The developing baby from nine weeks after fertilization until its birth.

Fibroid Tumour
A non-cancerous (benign) tumour of the uterine muscle wall that can cause abnormal bleeding.
Fimbriae
The finger-like projections at the end of the fallopian tube nearest the ovary. At the time of ovulation, the fimbriae create currents that help move the egg into the fallopian tube.

Follicle
A fluid-filled sac in the ovary that contains cells that produce hormones and releases an egg at ovulation.

Follicular Phase
The pre-ovulation phase of a woman's cycle during which a new egg is developing within the follicle. This phase is normally between 10 and 14 days, beginning on the first day of menstruation.

FSH (follicle stimulating hormone)
The pituitary hormone that stimulates follicular cell growth, stimulating the development of eggs and production of estrogen in women and sperm formation in men.

Gamete
Reproductive cells; sperm in men and the egg in women.

Gene
The basic units of heredity, genes are pieces of DNA arranged in sequence to form chromosomes. Each gene contains information for a specific trait.

GIFT (gamete intrafallopian transfer)
An ART procedure in which eggs are retrieved from the ovary, and together with sperm are placed directly into the fallopian tube in order for fertilization to occur.

GnRH
The hormone secreted by the hypothalamus that prompts the pituitary gland to release of gonadotropins.

Gonadotropins
Gonadotropins include follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH). These hormones stimulate the ovaries in women and the testes in men. See also 'hCG' and 'hMG'.

Gonads
The organs that produce the sex cells and sex hormones. They are the testicles in men and ovaries in women.

hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin)
The hormone released naturally early in pregnancy.

Hirsutism
Excessive growth of coarse, dark hair in women (typically on the face, chest, lower abdomen, back, upper arms, or upper legs) in a pattern similar to that of men's hair growth. This condition may be due ethnic background or to an excess level of androgens.

hMG (human menopausal gonadotropin)
The luteinizing (LH) and follicle stimulating hormones (FSH) extracted from the urine of post-menopausal women. It is used to stimulate the development of multiple follicles in some ART procedures.

Hormone
A substance produced within the body that travels through the bloodstream to a specific organ where it has a specific regulatory effect on the activity of that organ.

hSG (hysterosalpingography)
An X-ray examination of the uterus and fallopian tubes using a radio-opaque dye.

Hysteroscopy
A procedure which allows the doctor to examine the inner cavity of the uterus through a lighted scope inserted through the vagina and cervix.

ICI (intracervical insemination)
Artificial insemination of sperm injected into the cervical opening.

ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection)
A procedure used in conjunction with IVF in which a single sperm is injected into a single egg in order to facilitate fertilization.

Implantation
Implantation is when the embryo attaches itself to the uterine wall. Implantation may occur between five to seven days after fertilization.

Incompetent Cervix
Cervix with the inability to remain closed throughout an entire pregnancy. This condition may cause premature birth or miscarriage.

Infertility
Inability of a couple to achieve a pregnancy after one year of regular, unprotected intercourse. This definition also includes the inability to carry a pregnancy to a live birth.

IUI (intrauterine insemination)
A procedure in which washed sperm are injected into the uterine cavity, bypassing the cervix to bring the sperm closer to the egg for fertilization in the fallopian tube.

IVF (in vitro fertilization)
The procedure where eggs are removed from the ovaries and mixed with sperm under laboratory conditions. Eggs that fertilize become embryos and are transferred to the uterus in hopes that a pregnancy will result.
Klinefelter's Syndrome
A genetic abnormality in males that is a cause of infertility. It is characterized by having two X chromosomes and one Y chromosome, rather than only one X and one Y chromosome.

Laparoscopy
A surgical procedure where small incisions are made in the abdomen and in the navel, and a fibre-optic scope is inserted to examine and repair any of the pelvic organs.

Laparotomy
Surgical procedure that opens the abdomen.

LH (luteinizing hormone)
A gonadotropin that is released by the pituitary in both sexes. In women it acts to trigger ovulation and stimulates the corpus luteum to secrete progesterone. In men it stimulates cells within the testes.

LPD (luteal phase defect)
When the lining of the uterus does not mature properly in response to progesterone. This may occur because the uterine lining does not respond normally to progesterone, or because the secretion of progesterone by the ovary is too low.

Luteal Phase
The portion of a menstrual cycle before menstruation, but after ovulation. A normal luteal phase lasts approximately 12 to 16 days. This is the part of the cycle in which the corpus luteum releases progesterone which promotes the thickening of the uterine lining for the possible implantation of an embryo, which may result in pregnancy.

Meiosis
A cellular division process that results in the number of chromosomes in reproductive cells being reduced from 46 (as in all other body cells) to 23. Gametes (egg and sperm cells) form through the process of meiosis.

Morphology (of sperm)
Term referring to the shape of sperm. When sperm is diagnosed as having poor morphology, it means the sperm is misshapen and may be incapable of fertilization.

Motility (of sperm)
Refers to the swimming ability (movement) of the sperm.

Occlusion
A blockage. If fallopian tubes are occluded, it means they are blocked.

OHSS (ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome)
A potentially serious side effect of ovarian stimulation where the ovaries typically become swollen and painful. Other characteristics include fluid accumulation in the chest or abdomen, bloating, abdominal discomfort and excessive weight gain. It is classified as mild, moderate or severe. Although it occurs relatively infrequently, patients with severe OHSS will require medical intervention and hospitalization to manage the condition.

Oligomenorrhea
Medical term referring to infrequent or scanty menstrual periods.

Oocyte
An egg cell. Also called an ovum.

Ovary
The female gonad (one on each side of the uterus) that produces the egg and sex hormones.

Ovulation
The release of mature eggs from the ovary.

Ovum
An egg cell. Also called an oocyte.

PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome)
Also called Stein-Leventhal syndrome. A common hormonal condition among women of reproductive age characterized by an overabundance of androgens, enlarged ovaries containing numerous small cysts, abnormal menstrual cycles, lack of ovulation, and possibly infertility. Symptoms may include obesity or weight gain, acne, excessive hair growth and infrequent, absent or heavy menstruation. PCOS may also occur without outward symptoms.

Progesterone
The hormone produced during the second half (luteal phase) of a woman's cycle. It helps to prepare the lining of the uterus in preparation for implantation of a fertilized egg.

Prolactin
The pituitary hormone that stimulates the production of milk.

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss
Repetitive miscarriages, marked by two or more pregnancy losses.

Retrograde Ejaculation
Semen flows backwards into the bladder instead of forward through the urethra during ejaculation. It can possibly result in male infertility.
Salpingectomy
Removal of a fallopian tubes surgically.

Salpingitis
When one or both fallopian tubes are inflamed.

Salpingolysis
Surgical removal of adhesions in the fallopian tubes.

Salpingostomy
A surgical incision in the fallopian tubes. This may be done to remove an ectopic pregnancy.

Scrotum
Sac of skin and thin muscle that holds the testicles.

Secondary Infertility
Infertility in a couple that has previously had a child naturally.

Semen
The fluid that is secreted from the testicles, seminal vesicles and prostate during ejaculation.

Semen Analysis
Examination of semen for quality including sperm count, morphology, and motility.

Seminal Vesicles
The two glands found below the bladder, producing seminal fluid.

Seminiferous Tubules
The tubes found in the testicles that produce sperm.

Septate Uterus
A uterine abnormality dividing the uterus into two halves by a septum.

Sertoli Cell
The cells found in the testes that assist in sperm cell production.

Sonogram
Used to reveal images of internal organs and other structures inside the body using high-frequency sound waves. Images are created from the waves that bounce back. In fertility treatment it helps to examine pelvic organs, monitor follicular growth and to detect abnormalities such as cysts. This procedure is also known as ultrasound.

Sperm
The male reproductive cell or gamete.

Sperm Bank
A place where sperm is collected and frozen to be used at a later time by a couple or to be donated for use in assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs).

Sperm Concentration
The number of sperm per milliliter or cc, as measured during a semen analysis.

Sperm Count
The number of sperm present, as measured during a semen analysis.

Sperm Morphology
The shape and form of each sperm, as measured during a semen analysis.

Sperm Motility
The percentage of sperm moving forward, as measured during a semen analysis.

Sperm Vitality
Refers to the percentage of sperm that is alive, as measured during a semen analysis.

Sperm Washing
Technique that is used to separate bacteria, immotile sperm, and the seminal fluid from the highly active, normal sperm.

Spermatogenesis
Production of sperm within the seminiferous tubules.

Spermatozoa
The male reproductive cells or gametes. Also called sperm.

Stein-Leventhal Syndrome
Also called polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). A common hormonal condition among women of reproductive age characterized by an overabundance of androgens, enlarged ovaries containing numerous small cysts, abnormal menstrual cycles, lack of ovulation, and possibly infertility. Symptoms may include obesity or weight gain, acne, excessive hair growth and infrequent, absent or heavy menstruation. PCOS may also occur without outward symptoms.

Surrogate (Gestational Carrier)
When a woman carries a pregnancy to term for another person or couple through in vitro fertilization (IVF), using an embryo to which she is not genetically related.
Surrogate (Traditional)
A woman who agrees to become impregnated and carry a baby for another couple. She agrees to give the baby to the couple shortly after birth. This is done using the sperm of the male partner and the egg of the surrogate. It may also be performed using both donor sperm and egg. In this case the surrogate mother is genetically related to the child.

Teratozoospermia
Abnormally shaped sperm.

Testicle
The gonad of the male producing sperm and male sex hormones.

Testicular Biopsy
The surgical removal of testicular tissue for examination under a microscope. It is used to determine if the cells have the ability to produce normal sperm, or to determine if a lump is cancerous or not.

Testicular Failure
Occurs when the testes do not produce mature sperm or male hormones.

Testicular Torsion
A disorder where the spermatic cord twists on itself within the testicle, cutting off the blood supply to the testicle and other structures in the scrotum.

Testosterone
A hormone, primarily responsible for sperm production and male physical characteristics.

TET (tubal embryo transfer)
A form of assisted reproductive technology (ART) where an early stage embryo is placed into the fallopian tube.

Transvaginal Ultrasound Aspiration
The technique used in in vitro fertilization (IVF) to retrieve the eggs from the ovary using an ultrasound guided aspirating needle.

Tubal Ligation
A procedure to surgically tie or obstruct the fallopian tubes in order to sterilize a woman.

Tuboplasty
Plastic surgical repair of a tube such as the fallopian tubes.

Tumour
Benign or malignant growth of tissue.

Turner's Syndrome
A chromosomal abnormality in females where a chromosome is missing, causing no ovarian function.

Ultrasound
Used to reveal images of internal organs and other structures inside the body using high-frequency sound waves. Images are created from the waves that bounce back. In fertility treatment it helps to examine pelvic organs, monitor follicular growth and to detect abnormalities such as cysts. This procedure is also known as a sonogram.

Uterus
Female reproductive organ that protects, develops and nourishes the fetus until birth -- also referred to as the womb.

Vagina
The genital canal in the female that connects the external and internal sex organs.

Vas Deferens
The tubes connecting the epididymis ejaculatory duct.

Vasectomy
Male surgical sterilization by cutting or removing the vas deferens.

ZIFT (zygote intrafallopian transfer)
A form of assisted reproductive technology (ART) where the fertilized egg (zygote) is placed into the fallopian tube.

Zona Pellucida
The protective coating surrounding the egg that the sperm must penetrate in order for fertilization to occur.

Zygote
Fertilized ovum before cell division begins to form the embryo.