



GLOSSARY OF INFERTILITY TERMS

Androgens:

Male sex hormones

Andrologist:

A physician/scientist who performs laboratory evaluations of male fertility. May hold a Ph.D. degree instead of an M.D. Usually affiliated with a fertility treatment center working on in vitro fertilization.

Anovulation:

The failure to ovulate; ovulatory failure

Antibodies:

Chemicals made by the body to fight or attack foreign substances entering the body. Normally they prevent infection; however, when they attack the sperm or fetus, they cause infertility. Sperm antibodies may be made by either the man or the woman.

Artificial Insemination (AI):

The depositing of sperm in the vagina near the cervix or directly into the uterus, with the use of a syringe instead of by coitus. This technique is used to overcome sexual performance problems, to circumvent sperm-mucus interaction problems, to maximize the potential for poor semen, and for using donor sperm.

Artificial Insemination Donor (AID):

Artificial insemination with donor sperm. A fresh donor semen specimen or a thawed frozen specimen is injected close to the woman's cervix.

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART):

Several procedures employed to bring about conception without sexual intercourse, including intrauterine insemination and in vitro fertilization

Blastocyst:

An embryo that has developed for five days after fertilization. At this point the embryo has two different cell types and a central cavity.

Chromosome:

The structures in the cell that carry the genetic material (genes); the genetic messengers of inheritance. The human has forty-six chromosomes, twenty-three coming from the egg and twenty-three coming from the sperm.

Cryopreservation:

Freezing quickly and then storing, as in sperm, embryos, and unfertilized eggs

Egg Retrieval:

A procedure used to obtain eggs from ovarian follicles for use in in vitro fertilization. The procedure may be performed during laparoscopy or by using a long needle and ultrasound to locate the follicle in the ovary.

Embryo:

The early products of conception; the undifferentiated beginnings of a baby; the conceptus

Embryo Transfer:

Placing an egg fertilized outside the womb into a woman's uterus or fallopian tube

Estrogen:

Female sex hormone

Reproductive Endocrinologist:

A physician specializing in the practice of fertility. The American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology certifies a subspecialty for OB-GYNs who receive extra training in endocrinology (the study of hormones) and infertility.

Fertility Treatment:

Any method or procedure used to enhance fertility or increase the likelihood of pregnancy, such as ovulation induction treatment, intrauterine insemination, in vitro fertilization and microsurgery to repair damaged fallopian tubes. The goal of fertility treatment is to help couples have a child.

Fertility Workup:

The initial medical examinations and tests performed to diagnose or narrow down the cause of fertility problems

Fertilization:

The combining of the genetic material carried by sperm and egg to create an embryo. Normally occurs inside the fallopian tube (in vivo) but may also occur in a petri dish (in vitro).

Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI):

A micromanipulation procedure where a single sperm is injected into the egg to enable fertilization with very low sperm counts or with non-motile sperm

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF):

Literally means "in glass" - fertilization that takes place outside the body in a small glass/plastic dish or test tube

Infertility:

The inability to conceive after a year of unprotected intercourse or the inability to carry a pregnancy to term

Intrauterine Insemination (IUI):

Injection of washed sperm directly into the uterus to enhance sperm numbers present in the reproductive tract. Often carried out in conjunction with ovulation induction.

Ovulation Induction:

Medical treatment performed to initiate ovulation (e.g., Pergonal, Repronex, Follistim, Gonal-F).

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD):

A technique that can be used during in vitro fertilization procedures to test embryos for genetic disorders prior to their transfer into the uterus

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS or "Stein-Leventhal Syndrome"):

A condition found in women who don't ovulate, characterized by excessive production of androgens (male sex hormones) and the presence of cysts in the ovaries. Though PCOS can be without symptoms, some include excessive weight gain, acne and excessive hair growth.

Secondary Infertility:

The inability of a couple which has successfully achieved pregnancy to achieve another. This strict medical definition includes couples for whom the pregnancy did not go to term. The common vernacular, however, refers to a couple which has one biological child but is unable to conceive another.

Semen Analysis:

A laboratory test used to assess semen quality: sperm quantity, concentration, morphology (form), and motility. In addition, it measures semen (fluid) volume and whether or not white blood cells are present, indicating an infection.

Sperm Chromatin Structure Assay (SCSA):

A new test to evaluate the structural integrity of sperm DNA and its potential to initiate a pregnancy

Sterility:

An irreversible condition that prevents conception

Ultrasound:

A test used instead of X-rays to visualize the reproductive organs; for example, to monitor follicular development and to examine the tubes and uterus. The instrument works by bouncing sound waves off the organs. A picture displayed on a TV screen shows the internal organs.