

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adhesions: bands of fibrous tissue that bind the abdominal or pelvic organs together.

Amenorrhea: absence of menstrual periods.

Androgen: primarily a male sex hormone, found in the ovaries.

Anovulation: lack of ovulation.

Antisperm Antibody: a specialized test that detects the presence of antibodies against an individual's sperm cells; the antibodies cause the sperm to bind to one another in such a way that their motility is greatly reduced (*NOTE: this test can only be scheduled Monday – Thursday between 7:00 am and 9:00 am, as it must be sent to a reference laboratory*).

Autoimmune: pertaining to the development of an immune response to one's own tissues.

Assisted Hatching (AH): is a procedure done in the lab in which an opening is made in the eggshell surrounding the embryo which helps the embryo break out of its eggshell and attach itself to the uterine wall.

Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART): procedures that involve the surgical removal of eggs from the ovary to assist in successful fertilization of the egg and sperm; used when a blockage in the fallopian tubes prevents sperm and eggs from uniting for fertilization.

Baseline ultrasound: vaginal ultrasound conducted before starting therapy to determine the general position and condition of the ovaries.

Cervix: lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina.

Corpus luteum: the portion of the follicle that remains in the ovary after ovulation (if the egg is fertilized, the corpus luteum enlarges and releases hormones to support the pregnancy).

Cryopreservation: a process where sperm or embryos are frozen using a cryoprotectant solution and then stored in liquid nitrogen for future use.

Cycle day 3 labs: FSH, LH and E2 are lab tests which will determine ovarian function. These tests are performed on cycle day 2, 3 or 4.

Down regulation: administration of Lupron to suppress the body's natural hormones.

Dysmenorrhea: painful menstrual periods.

Dyspareunia: pain during intercourse, sometimes a symptom of endometriosis.

Ectopic pregnancy: the implantation of an embryo in a place other than the uterus.

Endometrial biopsy: a procedure used to check for ovulatory function which involves removing a tissue sample from the uterine lining and evaluating under a microscope.

Endometrium: the lining of the uterus that is shed each month during menstruation.

Estradiol (E2): levels of this hormone (released by developing follicles in the ovary) are used in conjunction with ultrasounds to determine growth and maturity of the follicles during ovarian stimulation.

Estrogen: a hormone produced mainly by the ovaries that is largely responsible for stimulating the endometrium during the first half of the menstrual cycle to thicken and prepare for pregnancy.

Fallopian tubes: tubes that facilitate transport of a mature egg from the ovary to the uterus, and where fertilization usually occurs.

Fibroids: (also called leiomyomas or myomas) benign growths that can develop inside the uterus, on its outer surface, attached to it by a stem like structure, or within the uterine wall; they can cause problems due to their size, number, and location, and can be found in 20-25% of all women.

Follicle: small, spherical structure just beneath the surface of the ovary that contains the egg; follicles mature during the first half of the menstrual cycle then rupture at ovulation and release the egg.

Follicle-Stimulating Hormone (FSH): a hormone produced by the pituitary gland that acts to stimulate the development and maturation of follicles.

GnRH analogs: (ie Lupron, Depo Lupron) synthetic chemicals similar to gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), which is the natural hormone that prompts the pituitary gland to stimulate the ovaries to produce estrogen and progesterone; prolonged use of GnRH analogs causes decreased hormone production and menopausal levels of estrogen.

Gonadotropin hormones: hormones such as LH and FSH that are secreted by the pituitary gland and function to control the reproductive organs.

HCG: human chorionic gonadotropin which is a hormone normally found in blood during pregnancy.

Hirsutism: excessive body hair; sometimes present in patients with PCO.

Hypothalamus: the endocrine gland at the base of the brain that controls functions such as body temperature and appetite, and also regulates the secretion of hormones by the pituitary gland.

Hysterosalpingogram (HSG): this test allows visualization of the inside of the uterus and tubes. It is a dye test that is performed in the radiology department of a hospital.

Hysteroscopy: a diagnostic procedure in which a hysteroscope is inserted through the vagina and cervical canal into the uterus to determine the presence of tumors, scars or abnormalities within the uterus.

ICSI: (intracytoplasmic sperm injection) is a process by which sperm is injected directly into the egg.

Infertility: medically defined as the inability to conceive a child after 1 year of unprotected sexual intercourse.

Intramuscular (IM) injection: a method of administering medication where a needle is inserted deep into the muscle of the thigh or upper buttock.

Intrauterine Insemination (IUI): a procedure where a semen sample is prepared in the laboratory using techniques designed to separate and concentrate the most motile sperm, followed by placement of this prepared sperm directly into the uterus via a small catheter.

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF): a type of ART procedure where the egg and sperm are fertilized outside the woman's body, then the embryo is later transferred into the woman's uterus.

Laparoscopy: a diagnostic procedure in which a surgeon inserts a laparoscope through a small incision in or below the navel, (one or two incisions may be made for inserting additional instruments) then visually inspects the uterus, uterine ligaments, fallopian tubes, ovaries, and other abdominal organs .

Laparotomy: a surgical procedure that requires an abdominal incision which allows the physician to adequately visualize any complication that may have occurred.

LH surge: a burst of luteinizing hormone released by the pituitary gland at mid-cycle that induces ovulation.

Menses (menstruation): shedding the lining of the uterus when there is no pregnancy.

Micro Epididymal Sperm Aspiration (MESA): a microsurgical technique utilized in cases of severe male factor infertility where sperm are surgically extracted from the epididymis.

OCP: oral contraceptive pill or birth control pill.

Oligomenorrhea: irregular menstrual periods.

Oocyte: another name for a developing egg cell; it contributes the female's portion of genes to the embryo.

Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS): a medical condition resulting from an over-stimulation of the ovaries that can cause a rapid accumulation of fluid in the abdomen and lungs; warning signs include: bloating, severe pelvic pain, nausea, vomiting, difficult breathing and weight gain.

Ovary: the organ in the female reproductive system that contains immature eggs and developing follicles.

Ovulation: the time when a mature egg (ready for fertilization) is released from a mature follicle and enters the fallopian tube.

“Phase I” appointment: an initial appointment where prior clinic records are NOT required; based on the information provided on your health history questionnaire, the physician or nurse practitioner determines which diagnostic tests are required as well as which pertinent records are needed from your previous health care provider.

“Phase II” appointment: a follow-up appointment that occurs upon receipt of test results from your Phase I appointment and review of your previous records; the physician will also discuss your results and formulate your treatment plan.

Pituitary gland: an endocrine gland located at the base of the brain which, when stimulated by the hypothalamus, releases FSH and LH.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCO): a condition that causes symptoms of infertility, frequently marked by a hormonal imbalance in which the LH level is high and the FSH level is either normal or low.

Postcoital Test: a diagnostic laboratory test used to evaluate cervical mucus and sperm activity following intercourse.

Progesterone: a female hormone produced after ovulation has occurred that acts to prepare the uterus for the implantation and development of the embryo.

Progesterone Challenge: a diagnostic test administered orally to evaluate estrogen production in anovulatory women; a positive test usually results in bleeding or spotting, and failure to respond means that the woman's estrogen levels are low (ie hypothalamic-pituitary failure or ovarian failure).

Program Start: the final stage of the IVF prescreening process; appointment includes sonohysterogram, trial transfer, consent signing with physician, and meeting with business office representative to discuss chosen program.

Prostaglandins: hormone-like chemicals produced in large amounts by endometrial cells that stimulate the uterine muscles to contract (and in turn, are largely responsible for causing menstrual cramps).

Reversible menopause: a hormonal state in which estrogen levels fall to menopause level, ovulation does not take place, the endometrium does not grow, and menstruation does not occur; reversible menopause is created intentionally in the clinical setting by taking GnRH analogs such as Lupron or Depo-Lupron.

Secondary amenorrhea: the cessation of menstrual cycles once established.

Semen Analysis (SA): the most comprehensive test performed for male infertility consisting of several different individual components: volume, pH, viscosity, appearance, motility, progression, concentration, white blood cells, supravital, agglutination, and morphology.

Sonohysterogram: an in-office procedure where saline is placed in the uterus by a small tube using the ultrasound probe. The integrity of the uterus is checked.

Subcutaneous (SC) injection: a method of administering medication where a needle is inserted just below the surface of the skin into the fatty tissue.

Testicular Sperm Extraction (TESE): a microsurgical technique utilized in cases of severe male factor infertility where sperm are surgically extracted from the testicle.

Traditional Consult: an appointment generally indicated for out-of-town patients where all available medical records are sent to the clinic in advance and patient is seen once to limit need for a return appointment (basically a combination of both Phase I and Phase II appointments at the same visit).

Trial of Transfer: a “trial run” using the transfer catheter

Ultrasound: a method performed via the abdomen or vagina that may be used to visually assess developing follicles and/or uterine lining.

Uterosacral ligaments: ligaments that attach the lowest part of the uterus and the cervix to the sacrum.

Uterus: the womb; a muscular organ where a developing embryo becomes implanted and grows during pregnancy.