

Glossary of terms & drugs



Fertility Facts

Most areas of medicine and science have their own jargon and fertility is no exception. There are also a lot of words you don't normally come across – they are here too.

REF 3186.16 – 12/11

Glossary of terms

Abdominal. The area of the tummy.

Amniocentesis. Procedure where cells are taken from the fluid around the fetus to detect abnormalities, usually between the 15th and 17th weeks of pregnancy.

Analgesic. Pain killer.

Azoospermia. No sperm in the semen.

Biochemical pregnancy. A pregnancy that ends at a very early stage.

Blastocyst. An embryo 5-6 days after fertilisation, consisting of an outer layer of cells that will become the placenta, and an inner mass of cells that will become the fetus.

Catheter. A fine plastic tube used to put sperm or embryos into the uterus through the cervix.

Cervix. The lower narrow end of the uterus that connects the uterine cavity to the vagina.

Chromosomes. Structures in the nucleus of the cell which carry genetic information.

Clearplan. Ovulation detection kit using plastic dip sticks that show changes in the levels of luteinising hormone (LH) in the urine.

Clinical pregnancy. A pregnancy that can be detected by ultrasound scanning of the uterus.

Cryoprotectant. Special antifreeze solution to enable sperm or embryos to survive freezing.

Culture medium. An artificial solution that provides nutrients to sperm, eggs and embryos.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS). A procedure where cells are taken from the placenta around 11 weeks of pregnancy to test for abnormalities in the fetus.



Day 1. First day of the period. Start of the menstrual cycle.

Ectopic. Pregnancy in a place other than the uterus, usually the Fallopian tube.

Ejaculate. The semen produced during sex or masturbation.

Embryologist. Laboratory staff who look after sperm, eggs and embryos in an IVF programme.

Endometriosis. A disease where cells from the lining of the uterus grow outside the uterus, usually in the pelvis or around the ovaries, and causes inflammation and scarring.

Epididymis. The twisted tube on the side of the testis through which sperm travel after leaving the testis.

Estradiol. The most common type of estrogen hormone produced by the cells of the ovarian follicles.

Estrogen. A type of hormone made by the ovaries that stimulates the growth of the lining of the uterus.

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TE RAUHANGA O TE WHARETANGATA

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Fallopian tubes. A pair of tubes attached to each side of the uterus through which the egg travels from the ovary to the uterus. Fertilisation usually occurs in the Fallopian tube. The Fallopian tube is the most common site of ectopic pregnancy.

Follicle. Fluid-filled structure in which the egg matures in the ovary.

Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). A hormone released by the pituitary gland that stimulates the growth of follicles in the ovary.

Follicular fluid. The fluid inside a follicle.

Fragmentation. The cellular debris left in an embryo when the cells do not divide evenly.

Gamete Intra-Fallopian Transfer (GIFT). Technique where sperm and eggs are placed into the Fallopian tube.

Hepatitis B and C. Viruses that may be sexually transmitted, or transmitted by contact with blood and other bodily fluids, that can cause infection of the liver leading to jaundice and liver failure.

Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin (hCG). A hormone made by the placenta that is similar to the hormone LH.

Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV). A retrovirus that causes immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), a disease that destroys the body's ability to protect itself from infection and disease. It is transmitted by the exchange of bodily fluids or blood transfusions.

Insemination. Placing sperm into the cervix or uterus, or in IVF placing sperm with the eggs in the laboratory.

Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). A technique that involves injecting a single sperm directly into each mature egg during the IVF procedure to maximise the chance of fertilisation. It involves using fine manipulators and a powerful microscope to see and handle the sperm and eggs.

In vitro fertilisation (IVF). A technique that involves combining an egg with sperm in a laboratory dish or tube. If the egg fertilises and begins cell division, the resulting embryo is transferred into the woman's uterus where it will hopefully implant and give rise to pregnancy. IVF is usually combined with drugs that stimulate the ovaries to produce several eggs in order to increase the chance of having at least two good quality embryos to transfer.

Karyotype. A test looking at the number and appearance of chromosomes from cells.

Luteinising hormone (LH). A hormone released by the pituitary gland that triggers ovulation. Once the LH surge has started, ovulation usually takes place within 12 to 36 hours.

Neo-natal. The first few weeks of a baby's life.

Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS). A disease that can follow from too many follicles being stimulated to grow at once in the ovaries. Fluid moves from the blood into the abdomen and into tissue. Untreated, it can have serious consequences, including stroke and even death.

Ovarian stimulation. Stimulating the ovary to produce more than one mature egg in a menstrual cycle by giving fertility drugs.

Ovulation. The release of a mature egg from its developing follicle in the ovary. This usually occurs about 14 days before the next menstrual period (ie. around the 14th day of a 28-day cycle).

Pelvic. The lower part of the abdomen, or tummy.

Pessaries. Drugs given in the vagina.

Pituitary gland. A gland in the brain releasing FSH and LH.

Polycystic Ovarian Disease/Syndrome (PCO). A condition where follicles do not grow past a certain size in the ovary, so ovulation often does not occur.

Progesterone. A type of hormone made by the ovary, in the second half of the menstrual cycle.

Semen. Fluid that constitutes the ejaculate.

Seminiferous tubules. Fine tubes packed in the testis, in which sperm are made.

Seminal fluid. The liquid part of the semen, in which the sperm swim around.

Semen analysis. The microscopic examination of semen to determine the number of sperm (sperm count), their shapes (morphology), and their ability to move (motility).

SET. Single Embryo Transfer

Speculum. A plastic or metal device, shaped rather like a 'duck's bill', that allows the cervix to be seen.

Sperm. The cells (spermatozoa) in the semen.

Sperm washing. A procedure to remove seminal fluid from sperm cells before intrauterine insemination or other assisted reproductive technologies.

TER. Thawed Embryo Replacement cycle.

Trigger. Induction of ovulation with hCG.

Uterus. Another name for the womb.

Vagina. The canal in the female that leads to the cervix, which leads to the uterus.

Zona, zona pellucida. The clear, soft shell surrounding the egg.

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Glossary of terms & drugs continued...

Glossary of medications

MEDICATION	ADVERSE EFFECTS
BUSERELIN – see <i>GnRH-agonist</i>	Hot flushes, mood swings, dry vagina after prolonged use.
CETROTIDE – see <i>GnRH-antagonist</i>	Nausea, headaches. Local irritation at the injection site.
CRINONE A gel containing progesterone that is inserted into the vagina. Crinone helps to maintain the lining of the uterus in readiness for a potential pregnancy.	Abdominal cramps, headaches, breast enlargement, constipation, nausea.
ELEVIT - A multivitamin tablet that contains 0.8mg of folic acid and is safe to use during pregnancy.	Skin rash, constipation, diarrhoea, heartburn.
FOLIC ACID - A vitamin taken prior to and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy that may help prevent Spina Bifida.	Nausea, flatulence, diarrhoea.
FSH – see <i>Gonadotrophin</i>	
GESTONE - An intramuscular injection containing progesterone. Gestone helps to maintain the lining of the uterus in readiness for a potential pregnancy.	Breakthrough bleeding, change in menstrual flow, amenorrhoea, changes in cervical erosion and secretions, breast changes, oedema, weight gain, acne, mental depression, pyrexia, insomnia, nausea. Local irritation at the injection site.
GONADOTROPHIN - An injectable drug used in ART to stimulate the development of ovarian follicles. A common abbreviation for Gonadotropin-releasing hormone is GnRH .	Mood swings, abdominal distension. Local irritation at the injection site. Stinging sensation at the time of injection.
GONAL F – see <i>Gonadotrophin</i>	
GnRH-agonist - A drug used to suppress the body's production of hormones FSH and LH during ART treatment. May also be used in the treatment of uterine fibroids and endometriosis.	Reversible menopausal-like symptoms including tiredness, headaches and hot flushes.
GnRH-antagonist - A drug used to suppress spontaneous ovulation during ART treatment.	Local irritation at the injection site.
hCG (HUMAN CHORIONIC GONADOTROPHIN) - An injection used to trigger the final maturation of eggs prior to ovulation or egg collection.	Possibility of increased abdominal distension. Local irritation at the injection site. Stinging sensation at the time of injection.
LEUPROLIDE – see <i>GnRH-agonist</i>	
LEVLEN ED – see <i>Oral contraceptive pill</i>	
LUCRIN – see <i>GnRH-agonist</i>	
LUPRON – see <i>GnRH-agonist</i>	
MICROGYNON – see <i>Oral contraceptive pill</i>	
NORETHISTERONE (PRIMOLUT) – see <i>Progesterone tablet</i>	
ORGALUTRAN – see <i>GnRH-antagonist</i>	Nausea, headaches. Local irritation at the injection site.
ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL (OCP) - A drug that is usually used to prevent pregnancy but can also be used in ART to help time the start of a treatment cycle. May also reduce the development of small ovarian cysts, which can delay the start of ovarian stimulation.	Irregular bleeding, nausea, headache, blurring of vision, breast discomfort, leakage of breast milk, depression, leg pain, glucose intolerance, fluid retention, oedema, intolerance to contact lenses, changes in appetite.

Glossary of terms & drugs continued...

MEDICATION	ADVERSE EFFECTS
OVIDREL – see hCG	
PREGNYL – see hCG	
PROFASI – see hCG	
PROGESTERONE TABLET - Used in ART to induce a withdrawal bleed in women who do not menstruate.	Nervousness, insomnia, fatigue, depression, dizziness and headache. Pruritus, irregular uterine bleeding, spotting, and amenorrhoea, nausea, breast tenderness, change in weight.
PROGYNOVA (ESTRADIOL VALERATE) - An estrogen tablet that thickens the lining of the uterus, usually in preparation for embryo transfer.	Headaches, irregular bleeding, nausea, breast tenderness and discomfort, leg pain, visual disturbance.
PROVERA – see Progesterone tablet	
PUREGON – see Gonadotrophin	
SUPREFACT – see GnRH-agonist	
SYNAREL – see GnRH-agonist	
UTROGESTAN - Pessaries containing progesterone that are inserted into the vagina. Utrogestan helps to maintain the lining of the uterus in readiness for a potential pregnancy.	Possible local irritation or an allergic reaction (rarely).
ZOLADEX – see GnRH-agonist	

Obtaining more information

You can find out a lot more about any medication registered in New Zealand by going to the Medsafe website (<http://www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/datasheet/dsform.asp>) and typing in the trade name or ingredient name of the drug.

The hormones	The drugs	Trade names
Gonadotrophin Releasing Hormone (GnRH)	GnRH agonists	Buserelin, Lucrin, Zoladex, Synarel
	GnRH antagonists	Cetrotide Orgalutran
Follicle stimulation hormone (FSH)	Follicle stimulation hormone (FSH)	Gonal F Puregon
Luteinising hormone (LH)	Luteinising hormone (LH)	Luversis
human Chorionic Gonadotrophin (hCG)	human Chorionic Gonadotrophin (hCG)	Ovidrel Pregnyl
Estradiol (E2)	Estradiol (E2)	Progynova Estrofem
Progesterone (P4)	Progesterone (P4)	Utrogestan Crinone Gestone
	Clomiphene citrate (CC)	Serophene
	The oral contraceptive pill (OCP)	Levlen ED, Microgynon

