

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms, Diagnoses and Procedures



This appendix contains basic information to assist non-medical members of the case review team to understand common terms, diagnoses and procedures that they might encounter in review of individual cases. (It may also be of use to the community action team members.) Local programs should feel free to add or delete items, as needed.

Please do not feel that these terms need to be memorized. Use this document as a dictionary and refer to it as needed. Experience tells us that after a year or so of reviewing cases, all team members will naturally come to an understanding of these terms, as well as others, without making any special effort.

Definitions in Appendix B are adopted from: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Your pregnancy and birth. 4th Ed. Washington, DC: ACOG; 2005 pp 353–361.

Amniocentesis: A procedure in which a small amount of amniotic fluid and cells are taken from the sac surrounding the fetus and tested.

Amniotic Fluid: Water in the sac surrounding the fetus in the mother’s uterus.

Analgesics: A type of drug that relieves pain without loss of muscle function.

Anemia: Abnormally low levels of blood or red blood cells in the bloodstream.

Anencephaly: A type of neural tube defect that occurs when the fetus’s head and brain do not develop normally.

Anesthetics: A type of drug that relieves pain by causing a loss of sensation.

Antibodies: Proteins in the blood produced in reaction to foreign substances, an antigen.

Antigen: A substance, such as an organism causing infection or a protein found on the surface of blood cells, that can induce an immune response.

Apgar Score: A measurement of a baby’s response to birth and life on its own, taken two and five minutes after birth.

Autopsy: An exam performed on a deceased person in an attempt to find the cause of death.

Bacterial Vaginosis: A type of vaginal infection caused by the overgrowth of a number of organisms that are normally found in the vagina.

Bilirubin: A reddish-yellow pigment that occurs especially in bile and blood and may cause jaundice.

Biophysical Profile: An assessment by ultrasound of fetal breathing, fetal body movements, fetal muscle tone and the amount of amniotic fluid. May include fetal heart rate.

Braxton Hicks Contractions: False labor pains.

Breech: A situation in which a fetus’ buttocks or feet would be born first.

Carrier: A person who shows no signs of a particular trait or disorder but has the gene and could pass the gene on to his or her children.

Cephalopelvic Disproportion: A condition in which a baby is too large to pass safely through the mother’s pelvis during delivery.

Cerclage: A procedure to sew the cervix shut.

Cervix: The lower, narrow end of the uterus, which protrudes into the vagina.



Cesarean Delivery: Birth of a baby through an incision made in the mother's abdomen and uterus.

Chlamydia: A sexually transmitted disease that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and problems during pregnancy.

Chorioamnionitis: Inflammation or infection of the membrane surrounding the fetus.

Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS): A procedure in which a small sample of cells is taken from the placenta and tested.

Cleft Palate: A congenital defect in which a gap or space occurs in the roof of the mouth.

Clubfoot: A misshaped foot twisted out of position from birth.

Congenital Disorder: A condition that is present in a baby when it is born.

Contraction Stress Test: A test in which mild contractions of the mother's uterus are induced and the fetus's heart rate in response to the contractions is recorded using an electronic fetal monitor.

Corticosteroids: Hormones given to mature fetal lungs, for arthritis or other medical conditions.

Crowning: The appearance of the baby's head at the vaginal opening during labor.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV): A virus in the herpes virus family that can be passed on to a baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding and can cause problems with the liver, hearing, vision and mental functioning.

Diabetes: A condition in which the levels of sugar in the blood are too high.

Diastolic Blood Pressure: The force of the blood in the arteries when the heart is relaxed; the lower blood pressure reading.

Doppler: A form of ultrasound that reflects motion—such as the fetal heartbeat—in the form of audible signals.

Down Syndrome: A genetic disorder in which mental retardation, abnormal features of the face and medical problems such as heart defects occur.

Ectopic Pregnancy: A pregnancy in which the fertilized egg begins to grow in a place other than inside the uterus, usually in the fallopian tubes.

Edema: Swelling caused by fluid retention.

Effacement: Thinning of the cervix during the beginning stages of labor.

Electrode: A small wire that is attached to the scalp of the fetus to monitor the heart rate.

Electronic Fetal Monitor: An electronic instrument used to record the heartbeat of the fetus and contractions of the mother's uterus.

Embryo: The developing fertilized egg of early pregnancy.

Epidural Block: Anesthetic that numbs the lower half of the body.

Episiotomy: A surgical incision made into the perineum (the region between the vagina and the anus) to widen the vaginal opening for delivery.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A pattern of physical, mental and behavioral problems in the baby that are thought to be due to alcohol abuse by the mother during pregnancy.



Fetal Monitoring: A procedure in which instruments are used to record the heartbeat of the fetus and contractions of the mother's uterus during labor.

Fetus: A baby growing in the woman's uterus.

Fibronectin: A type of protein made by the fetus that can be measured in secretions from the cervix.

Forceps: Special instruments placed around the baby's head to help guide it out of the birth canal during delivery.

Fragile X Syndrome: A genetic disease, inherited through the X-chromosome, that is the most common inherited cause of mental retardation.

Fraternal Twins: Twins, developed from two fertilized eggs, who are not genetically identical.

General Anesthesia: The use of drugs that produce a sleep-like state to prevent pain during pregnancy.

Gestational Diabetes: Diabetes that arises during pregnancy.

Gestational Hypertension: High blood pressure that occurs during the second half of pregnancy and disappears soon after the baby is born.

Glucose: A sugar that is present in the blood and is the body's main source of fuel.

Gonorrhea: A sexually transmitted disease that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and arthritis.

Hepatitis B Immune Globulin: A substance given to provide temporary protection against infection with hepatitis B virus.

Hepatitis B Virus: A virus that attacks and damages the liver, causing inflammation.

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG): A hormone produced during pregnancy; its detection is the basis for most pregnancy tests.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV): A virus that attacks certain cells of the body's immune system and causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Human Papillomavirus (HPV): The common name for a group of related viruses, some of which cause genital warts and are linked to cervical changes and cervical cancer.

Hydramnios: A condition in which there is an excess amount of amniotic fluid in the sac surrounding the fetus.

Hyperemesis Gravidarum: Severe nausea and vomiting during pregnancy that can lead to loss of weight and body fluids.

Identical Twins: Twins, developed from a single fertilized egg, who usually are genetically identical.

Jaundice: A buildup of bilirubin that causes a yellowish appearance.

Kick Counts: Records kept during late pregnancy of the number of times a fetus moves over a certain period.

Labor Induction: Using medical or surgical methods to stimulate contractions of the uterus.

Local Anesthesia: The use of drugs that prevent pain in a part of the body.

Macrosomia: A condition in which a fetus grows very large.



Meconium: A greenish substance that builds up in the bowels of a growing fetus.

Miscarriage: Early pregnancy loss.

Multiple Pregnancy: A pregnancy in which there are two or more fetuses.

Neural Tube Defects: Birth defects that result from incomplete development of the brain, spinal cord or their coverings.

Nonstress Test: A test in which changes in the fetal heart rate are recorded, using an electronic fetal monitor.

Nuchal Translucency Screening: A special ultrasound test of the fetus to screen for the risk of Down syndrome and other birth defects.

Oxytocin: A hormone used to help bring on contractions of the uterus.

Perineum: The area between the vagina and the rectum.

Pica: The urge to eat nonfood items.

Placenta: Tissues that provides nourishment to and takes away waste from the fetus.

Placenta Previa: A condition in which the placenta lies very low in the uterus, so that the opening of the uterus is partially or completely covered.

Placental Abruption: A condition in which the placenta has begun to separate from the inner wall of the uterus before the baby is born.

Polydactyly: The condition of having more than the normal number of fingers or toes.

Postpartum Blues: Feelings of sadness, fear, anger or anxiety occurring about three days after childbirth and usually going away (ending) within 1-2 weeks.

Postpartum Depression: Intense feelings of sadness, anxiety or despair after childbirth that interfere with a new mother's ability to function and that do not go away after two weeks.

Pre-eclampsia: A condition of pregnancy in which there is high blood pressure and protein in the urine.

Premature Rupture of Membranes: A condition in which the membranes that hold the amniotic fluid rupture before labor.

Preterm: Born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

Pyelonephritis: An infection of the kidney.

Respiratory Distress Syndrome: A condition causing breathing difficulties in some babies in whom the lungs are not mature.

Rh Factor: A kind of protein in some types of blood that causes responses in the immune system.

Rh Immunoglobulin (Rhlg): A substance given to prevent an Rh-negative person's antibody response to Rh-positive blood cells.

Rupture of Membranes: The breaking of the amniotic sac that surrounds the fetus.

Spina Bifida: A neural tube defect that results from incomplete closure of the fetal spine.

Spinal Block: A form of anesthesia that numbs the lower half of the body.

Stillbirth: Delivery of a baby that shows no sign of life.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): The unexpected death of an infant in which the cause is unknown.

Surfactant: A substance, coating the air sacs in the lungs, that helps the lungs expand.



Syphilis: A sexually transmitted disease that is caused by an organism called *Treponema pallidum*; it may cause major health problems or death in its later stages.

Systemic Analgesics: Drugs that provide pain relief over the entire body without causing loss of consciousness.

Systolic Blood Pressure: The force of the blood in the arteries when the heart is contracting; the higher blood pressure reading.

Teratogens: Agents that can cause birth defects when a woman is exposed to them during pregnancy.

Tocolytics: Medications used to delay preterm labor.

Toxoplasmosis: An infection caused by *Toxoplasma gondii*, an organism that may be found in raw and rare meat, garden soil and cat feces and that can be harmful to the fetus.

Transducer: A device that emits sound waves and translates the echoes into electrical signals.

Trichomoniasis: A type of vaginal infection caused by a one-celled organism that usually is transmitted through sex.

Trimesters: The three-month periods into which pregnancy is divided.

Ultrasound: A test in which sound waves are used to examine internal structures; during pregnancy, it can be used to examine the fetus.

Umbilical Cord: A cord-like structure containing blood vessels that connects the fetus to the placenta.

Vacuum Extraction: The use of a special instrument attached to the baby's head to help guide it out of the birth canal during delivery.

Vertex Presentation: A normal position of a fetus in which the head is positioned down, ready to come through the vagina first.

Vibroacoustic Stimulation: The use of sound and vibration to wake the fetus during a non-stress test.