

## List of difficult words

Here is a list of words that may be difficult to understand. Knowing what these words mean can help you use this book better.

Some of the explanations here in this vocabulary also contain words written in *slanted letters*. This is because an explanation for these words can also be found in this list.

This vocabulary is listed in the order of the alphabet:

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**

### A

**abdomen** The part of the body that contains the stomach, liver, guts, and reproductive organs. The belly.

**abnormal bleeding** Bleeding that is different from what is usual, natural, or average. Not normal.

**access** When health services and other public services are available, and the services are easy for a woman with a disability to get to and use.

**acute** When something happens suddenly, lasts for a short time, and is usually serious or strong—for example, acute pain or acute infection (compare with *chronic*).

**afterbirth** See *placenta*.

**allergy, allergic reaction, allergic shock**  
A problem—such as itching, sneezing, hives or rash, and sometimes difficulty breathing or shock—that affects certain people when specific things are breathed in, eaten, *injected*, or touched. Allergic shock is a severe form of allergic reaction.

**antibiotic** Medicine used to fight infection caused by bacteria. (Antibiotics DO NOT fight infections caused by viruses.)

**antibody** A substance the body makes to fight infection.

**antiretrovirals** Medicines used to help people with AIDS stay healthier and live longer. They do not cure AIDS.

**atrophy** A progressive wasting or weakening of the muscles that comes from a problem in the nerves (compare with *dystrophy*).

### B

**biopsy** When a piece of *tissue* or fluid is taken from somewhere on or in the body and examined to see if it is healthy or diseased.

**birth control** See *family planning*.

**birth defects** Physical problems, or problems with understanding or learning, that a child is born with.

**birth spacing** Using *family planning* methods to space your children.

**blood pressure** The force or pressure of the blood upon the walls of the blood vessels (arteries and veins). Blood pressure varies with the age and health of the person.

**blood transfusion** When someone's blood is given to another person, in a vein and using a special needle, to replace blood the person may have lost.

**brand name** The name for a medicine that is given by the company that makes it. Compare with *generic*.

## C

**caliper** An aid which gives support to a weak or injured leg. Another word for 'brace.'

**cancer** A serious disease that causes *cells* to change and grow in an abnormal way, causing growths. Cancer can affect many different parts of the body.

**cell** The smallest unit of living matter in the body.

**chart** A file where information about a person's illnesses and treatments is kept.

**chronic** Something that lasts for a long time, or that occurs often. Compare with *acute*.

**contaminated** When medical supplies or food contain harmful germs.

**contracture** Reduced range of motion in a joint, often due to muscle shortening.

**convulsion** An uncontrolled seizure, 'fit.'  
A sudden jerking of part or all of the body.

## D

**date rape** When a woman is forced to have sex by a man she is dating or courting.

**douche** Washing out the vagina. This can cause harm because it washes out the natural healthy wetness in the vagina.

**dystrophy** A progressive muscle weakness that comes from a problem in the muscles themselves (compare with *atrophy*).

## E

**enema** A solution of water put up the anus to make a person pass stool or to increase the amount of fluid in the body.

**estrogen** A female *hormone*.

## F

**family planning** When a woman uses methods to prevent pregnancy so she can have the number of children she wants, when she wants them.

## G

**gang rape** When someone is raped by more than one man.

**gender role** The way a community defines what it means to be a woman or man.

**generic** The name of the main ingredient in a medicine. Compare with '*brand name*.'

## H

**hemorrhoids** Small, painful bumps or lumps at the edge of the anus or inside it. They are a type of swollen veins that may burn, hurt, or itch.

**hepatitis** A serious disease of the *liver* caused by a virus, bacteria, alcohol, or chemical poisoning. Some forms of hepatitis can be sexually transmitted.

**home remedies** Traditional ways of healing.

**hormones** Chemicals the body makes that tell it how and when to grow. *Estrogen* and *progesterone* are the most important hormones for women.

## I

**immunization** See *vaccination*.

**infant formula** Artificial milk for babies used instead of breast milk. Infant formula and other replacement foods do not have the same nutrition or health benefits as breast milk.

**infection** A sickness caused by bacteria, viruses, or other organisms. Infections may affect part of the body or all of it.

**injections** When medicine or other liquid is put into the body using a *syringe* and needle.

**intramuscular injection (IM)** *Injection* deep into the muscle.

**intravenous (IV)** When medicines or fluids are put into a vein.

## J

**jaundice** Yellow color of the skin and eyes. Jaundice can be a sign of *hepatitis* or of newborn jaundice.

## L

**ligament** Tough strips or bands inside the body that hold joints and bones together. Ligaments join bones with other bones, while tendons or cords join bones with muscles.

**liver** A large organ under the lower right ribs that helps clean the blood and get rid of poisons.

## M

**massage** A way of touching the body to relieve pain, tension, or other signs. Massaging the belly can help the womb *contract* and stop heavy bleeding after birth, miscarriage, or abortion.

**midwife** Someone with special training or experience to help a woman give birth.

## N

**nerves** Thin fibers along which messages travel in the body. Nerves are the 'messengers' of the body. Some nerves let us feel things, and tell us when something hurts. Other nerves let us move parts of the body when we want to.

## O

**operation** When a doctor makes a cut in the skin in order to repair damage inside, or to change the way the body functions.

**orthopedic** Aids, procedures, or surgery to help with the prevention or correction of injuries or disorders of the bones and skeletal system, and associated muscles, joints, and ligaments.

## P

**paraplegia** Paralysis or loss of movement in the muscles of both legs (sometimes with slight involvement elsewhere) caused by disease or injury to the spinal cord.

**physical therapist, physiotherapist** A person who designs and teaches exercises and activities for people with physical disabilities.

**placenta (afterbirth)** A spongy organ in a woman's womb that gives the baby everything it needs to grow during pregnancy. The baby is connected to the placenta by the cord. After the baby is born, the placenta also comes out of the womb.

**plant medicines** Flowers, leaves, roots, and other parts of plants that can be used to treat diseases.

**progesterone** A female *hormone*.

**progestin** A *hormone* made in a laboratory that is similar to the *progesterone* made naturally in a woman's body. It is found in some hormonal *family planning* methods.

**pus** White or yellow fluid that is filled with germs, often found inside an *infected* tear or wound.

## Q

**quadriplegia (tetraplegia)** Paralysis or loss of movement in the muscles of both arms and legs caused by disease or injury high up in the spinal cord, close to or in the neck.

## R

**rectal exam** Checking the rectum for growths or other problems. A rectal exam can also give information about the wall or lining of the vagina.

**resistance** The ability of something to defend itself against something that would normally harm or kill it. Bacteria, viruses, and parasites can become resistant to the effects of certain medicines, especially *antibiotics* and *antiretrovirals*, so these treatments no longer fight disease.

## S

**scar** A cut or wound that leaves the skin or *tissue* rough and raised after it has healed.

**scrotum** The bag between a man's legs that holds his testicles or ('balls').

**seizures** See *convulsion*.

**sepsis** A serious infection that has spread into the blood.

**shock** A dangerous condition with severe weakness or loss of consciousness, cold sweats, and fast, weak pulse. It can be caused by dehydration, heavy bleeding, injury, burns, or a severe illness.

**side effects** When medicines or *hormonal methods* cause changes in the body other than those needed to fight disease or prevent pregnancy.

**spasticity** Uncontrolled tightening or pulling of muscles that make it difficult for a person to control her movements. Spasticity often occurs with cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, or brain damage.

**stress** The result of activities or events that put pressure on a woman, causing tension in her body and mind.

**stroke** A sudden loss of consciousness, feeling, or ability to move caused by bleeding or a clot inside the brain.

**subcutaneous injection** An *injection* into the fatty *tissue* under the skin, not into the muscle.

**syringe** An instrument used to *inject* medicine.

## T

**temperature** The degree of heat of a person's body.

**thermometer** An instrument used to measure how hot a person's body *temperature* is.

**tissue** The material making up the muscles, fatty areas, and organs of the body.

**toxemia** A dangerous condition during pregnancy, which can lead to *convulsions*.

## V

**vaccinations or vaccines** Medicines that are *injected* to give protection against specific diseases like tetanus.

**Velcro** The brand name of a strong, fuzzy plastic tape that sticks to itself. (The surface of one piece of the tape has little plastic hooks that catch onto the curly hairs on the other piece of the tape.) Useful to use instead of buttons, buckles, or laces on clothes, braces and shoes—especially for people with limited use of the hands.

## W

**weight-bearing** Supporting the weight of the body on a particular joint or limb. For example, weight-bearing on the knee is possible if the strength of the thigh muscle is good, but not if it is poor.

## X

**x-rays** Pictures of parts of the inside of the body, such as the bones or the lungs, which are created by rays sent through the body. The body does not need to be cut open.