**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 the book better.

Some of the words included here are explained in the chapters, but many are not. The first time they are used in a chapter, the words are written in slanted letters. Some of the explanations here in this vocabulary also contain words written in slanted letters. This is because an explanation for these words can be found somewhere else in this list.

This vocabulary is listed in the order of the alphabet:

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**AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)**

A disease caused by the HIV virus usually passed through sex. A person has AIDS (rather than just being infected with HIV) when the immune system gets so weak it can no longer fight off common infections and illnesses.

**allergy, allergic reaction, allergic shock** A problem—such as itching, sneezing, hives or rash, and sometimes difficult 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.

**anal sex** Having sex in the *anus*. |

**anemia** A disease in which the blood gets weak and thin because it lacks red blood cells. This happens when blood is lost or destroyed faster than the body can replace it.

**anesthesia** General anesthesia is when you are given medicine to make you sleep during an operation so you will not feel pain. Local anesthesia is when you are given an injection in one place so that you will not feel pain in that area.

**antacid** Medicine used to control too much stomach acid and to calm stomach upset. See heartburn.

**antibiotic** Medicine used to fight infection caused by bacteria.

**antibodies** Substances the body makes to fight infection.

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

**anus** The opening of the intestine where waste (stool) leaves the body.

**anxiety** Feeling nervous or worried.

**appendicitis** An infection of the appendix.
appendix A finger-like sac attached to the large intestine.

areola The dark, bumpy area around the nipple.

ART Antiretroviral Therapy ART is a combination of 3 or more antiretroviral medicines taken every day by people with HIV. (It is also called HAART or Triple Therapy.)

artery A thin, tube-like vessel that carries blood from the heart through the body. Arteries have a pulse. Veins, which return blood to the heart, have no pulse.

arthritis Pain and swelling in the joints.

asthma A disease of the lungs, which causes attacks of difficult breathing. There is often a hissing or wheezing sound when a person breathes out.

bacteria Germs that cause many different infectious diseases. Bacteria are too small to see without a microscope.

bacterial vaginosis An infection of the vagina caused by bacteria.

bag of waters The sac (or amniotic sac) inside the womb that holds the baby. When the sac breaks and releases fluid, this usually means that labor has begun.

balls Part of the man’s outer genitals. Also called the testicles.

barrier methods Family planning methods that prevent pregnancy by keeping the sperm from reaching the egg.

Bartholin’s glands Small glands on either side of the vaginal opening that make a liquid to keep the vagina wet.

benefit The good that something may bring.

bile A liquid found in the gallbladder that helps digest fatty foods.

bilharzia An infection caused by a kind of worm that gets into the bloodstream.

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 canal See vagina.

birth control See family planning.

birth control pills A hormonal family planning method.

birth defects Physical or mental problems a child is born with, like a cleft lip or cleft palate, or an extra finger or toe.

birth spacing Using family planning methods to space your children.

blackouts When you are using too much alcohol or other drugs and wake up not knowing what happened.

bladder The bag inside the abdomen that stores urine. As the bladder fills, it stretches and gets bigger.

blood clots Soft, dark red, shiny lumps in the blood that look like liver.

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.

blurred eyesight When the eyes cannot see things clearly.

bowels The intestines.

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

breast exam Checking the breasts for lumps that might be a sign of cancer.

breast infection (mastitis) An infection inside the breast that can be very painful for the mother, and make it difficult for the baby to suck the nipple.

breach When a baby is born feet or buttocks first, instead of head first. This can be dangerous for the baby.

bronchitis An infection of the large tubes in the lungs.

buttocks The round, fleshy part of the body a person sits on.
chronic  Something that lasts for a long time, or that occurs often. Compare with acute.

circulation  Blood flowing through the arteries and veins in the body.

circumcision (in a man)  When the loose fold of skin at the end of a man’s penis is cut off.

circumcision (in a woman)  When part or all of a girl or woman’s outer genitals are cut off.

cleft lip  An opening or gap on a baby’s upper lip, often connecting to the nostril.

cleft palate  A split or abnormal opening in the roof of the baby’s mouth.

climax  When the body reaches its peak of sexual pleasure. Also called an “orgasm.”

clitoris  The part of the vulva most sensitive to touch.

clots  See blood clots.

cold sores  See herpes.

colostrum  The yellow-colored milk that comes from the breasts for the first 2 or 3 days after birth. It is very healthy for the baby and protects against disease.

community health workers  Health workers who work in the community and may or may not have formal training.

complications  Problems or things that go wrong.

compost  A mixture of plant and animal waste that is allowed to rot for use as a fertilizer. Hay, dead leaves, vegetable waste, animal droppings, and manure all make good compost.

compress  A folded cloth or pad that is put on a part of the body. The compress may be soaked in hot or cold liquid.

conception  When the egg and sperm join to begin making a baby.

condom (rubber)  A narrow bag of thin rubber that the man wears on his penis during sex. The bag traps the man’s sperm so that it cannot get into the woman’s womb and make her pregnant. Condoms also help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

condom for women  See female condom.
constipation  When a person has a difficult time passing stool.
contagious  An illness that can be spread easily from one person to another.
contaminated  When medical supplies or food contain harmful germs.
contraception (birth control)  Any method of preventing pregnancy. See family planning.
contraceptive gel  A slippery jelly or cream that is put into the vagina before sex to prevent pregnancy.
contractions (pains, labor pains)  When the womb squeezes and becomes hard. Contractions open the cervix and help push the baby out of the womb.
convulsion  An uncontrolled seizure or “fit.” A sudden jerking of part or all of the body.
cord (umbilical cord)  The cord that connects the baby at its navel (belly button) to the placenta.
counseling  When a trained person helps you think about your situation or decisions you need to make. For example, some people are trained especially to help people cope with HIV and AIDS.
counting days method  A family planning method in which a woman counts the days of her monthly cycle to find out when she is most fertile. She then avoids having sex during her fertile time.
cramps  A painful tightening or contraction of a muscle. Many woman have cramps that begin just before monthly bleeding or just after it starts.
cryotherapy  A treatment that freezes and destroys abnormal tissue on the cervix.
curette  A small tool used to scrape out the lining of the womb during a dilation and curettage (D and C).
dengue fever  A serious illness caused by a virus that is spread by mosquitoes.
dependence  When the mind feels an overpowering need for a drug.
depression  When a person feels extremely sad or feels nothing at all.
diabetes  When a person’s body does not use sugar properly.
diaphragm  A family planning method in which a soft rubber or silicone cup, usually filled with contraceptive gel or cream, is worn over the cervix during sex.
diarrhea  Passing 3 or more loose, watery stools in a day.
digestion  When food is broken down by the stomach and intestines to be used by the body or to pass out of the body as waste.
dilation and curettage (D and C)  To gradually open the cervix and then scrape out the womb. Often used for an abortion or to find the cause of abnormal bleeding from the vagina.
disability  Physical or mental limitations that affect daily living.
discharge (from the vagina)  The wetness or fluid that comes out of the vagina.
discrimination  When people are ignored or treated badly because of who they are (for example, because they are women or old or poor).
disinfection  Cleaning tools and equipment in a certain way to get rid of nearly all the germs. Also called high-level disinfection.
divorce  To legally end a marriage.
dizziness  Feeling lightheaded or unsteady.
dose  The amount of a medicine you should take at one time.
douche  Washing out the vagina. This can cause harm because it washes out the natural wetness in the vagina.
drugs  Substances, like alcohol and cocaine, that can be used in harmful ways to alter the mind, to feel good, or to cope with life.
dysentery  Diarrhea with mucus or blood in it, usually caused by an infection.
**E**

eclampsia  A dangerous condition during pregnancy, which can lead to seizures (convulsions).

ectopic pregnancy  See pregnancy in the tube.

ejaculate  When a man reaches his peak of sexual pleasure and his semen comes out.

embryo  An unborn baby is called an embryo between the second and eighth weeks after conception.

emphysema  A serious lung disease.

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.

epilepsy  A disease in which a person has convulsions and loss of consciousness.

erection  When a man becomes sexually excited and his penis gets hard.

esophagus  The tube connecting the mouth and the stomach that food goes down.

estrogen  A female hormone.

examination (exam)  When a health worker, nurse, or doctor looks at, listens to, or feels parts of the body to find out what is wrong.

exhaustion  Extreme tiredness.

**F**

fainting  See loss of consciousness.

fallen womb  See prolapsed uterus.

fallopian tubes  The tubes that lead from the ovaries to the womb. When the ovary releases an egg, it travels down these tubes to the womb.

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

farsighted  Being able to see things that are far away but not things close by. Often happens after age 40.

fats  Foods, like oils and butter, that give the body energy.

female condom  A thin piece of rubber that fits into the vagina and covers the outer folds of the vulva. The condom prevents a man’s sperm from reaching the woman’s womb.

fertile time  The time in a woman’s cycle when she can get pregnant. For most women, this time starts about 8 days after the first day of the last monthly bleeding and lasts for about 11 days.

fertility awareness (Natural Family Planning)  A family planning method that teaches a woman how to know her fertile time.

fertilization  See conception.

fertilizer  A material used to make the land richer so that more crops can be produced.

fetoscope  A tool for listening to and counting the heartbeat of the baby inside the mother’s womb.

fetus  The baby growing inside the womb.

fever  When the body temperature is higher than normal.

fiber  Parts of certain plants that when eaten help the body pass stool.

fibroids  Growth in the womb that can cause abnormal bleeding from the vagina, pain, and repeated miscarriage.

fistula  A hole in the skin between the vagina and the urine tube or rectum that causes urine or stool to leak from the vagina.

fit  See convulsion.

flashback  When a person suddenly remembers something from the past as if it is happening now.

flexibility  When the muscles and joints can move easily, without stiffness or pain.

folic acid or folate  A B-vitamin that helps make healthy red blood cells. It is especially important that a pregnant woman get enough folic acid in her diet in order to prevent birth defects in the baby.

fumes  Vapors that can contain harmful chemicals.

**G**

gallbladder  A small, muscular sac attached to the liver. The gallbladder collects a liquid that helps digest fatty foods.

gallstones  Hard material that forms in the gallbladder and can cause severe pain.

gang rape  When a woman or girl is raped by more than one man.
gangrene  When skin and tissue dies because of a lack of blood to that area.

gauze  Soft, loosely woven kind of cloth used for bandages.

gender discrimination  See discrimination.

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.

genital herpes  A sexually transmitted infection that produces sores on the genitals or on the mouth.

genital warts  Growth on the genitals, caused by the HPV virus which is passed during sex.

genitals  The sexual parts both inside and outside a woman’s body.

German measles  See rubella.

germs  Very small organisms that can grow in the body and cause some infectious diseases.

gland  A small sac that produces fluid.

glaucoma  A disease of the eye in which too much pressure builds up inside the eyeball and damages vision. Glaucoma can happen slowly (chronic glaucoma) or suddenly (acute glaucoma).

glaze  The liquid coating on a clay pot that hardens when fired and keeps water from seeping through the clay.

goiter  A swelling on the lower front of the neck (enlargement of the thyroid gland) caused by lack of iodine in the diet.

gonorrhea  A sexually transmitted infection.

groin  The very top of the leg where it joins the body in the front, next to the genitals.

gut thread  A special thread for sewing or stitching tears from childbirth. The gut thread is slowly absorbed (disappears) so that the stitches do not need to be taken out.

glaze  The liquid coating on a clay pot that hardens when fired and keeps water from seeping through the clay.

glaze  The liquid coating on a clay pot that hardens when fired and keeps water from seeping through the clay.

H

hallucinations  Seeing strange things or hearing voices that others do not see or hear.

health centers  Places that provide a middle level of health care, usually in larger towns. Health centers may have trained nurses and doctors.

health posts  A place that provides health care like immunizations, prenatal care, family planning, and health exams.

heartburn  A burning feeling in the throat that is common in later pregnancy.

helper foods  Foods that provide nutrition—like protein, vitamins, minerals, fats, and sugar—that are needed in addition to the main food.

hemorrhage  Heavy bleeding.

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. Some forms of hepatitis can be sexually transmitted.

herbicides  Chemicals used to kill unwanted plants.

herpes  Several diseases caused by different viruses that cause sores on the mouth or genitals. Herpes can be passed through sex.

herpes zoster (shingles)  A painful rash caused by the chickenpox virus, with blisters on the face, back, and chest.

high blood pressure  When the force or pressure of the blood upon the walls of the arteries and veins is harder than normal.

HIV (Human Immune-deficiency Virus)  It is the virus that causes AIDS.

hives  Hard, thick, raised spots on the skin that itch severely. They may come and go at once or move from one place to another. A sign of allergic reaction.

home remedies  Traditional ways of healing.

hookworm  A parasitic worm that infects the intestines.

hormonal methods  Family planning methods that prevent the woman’s ovary from releasing an egg and keep the lining of the womb from supporting a pregnancy.
hormones  Chemicals the body makes that tell it how and when to grow. Estrogen and progesterone are the most important hormones for women.

hospital  A medical center with doctors, nurses, and special equipment for finding or treating serious illnesses.

HPV  Some strains of Human Papilloma Virus cause genital warts, others cause cervical cancer. There is now a HPV vaccine.

hydrogen peroxide  A chemical that kills germs, often used for cleaning wounds.

hymen  A thin piece of skin that partially closes off the vaginal opening. In some communities, a woman is no longer considered a virgin if her hymen is torn, even though it can be torn by activities other than sex.

hysterectomy  An operation in which the womb is removed.

immune system  The parts of the body that recognize harmful germs and try to fight off infection.

immunization  See vaccination.

implantation  When the fertilized egg attaches to the womb wall at the beginning of pregnancy.

implants  A family planning method in which 1 or 2 small tubes containing hormones are put under the skin.

impotence  When a man is unable to have sex, usually because his penis will not get or stay hard.

incest  Sexual relations between family members or relatives.

incision  A cut made into the body.

incomplete abortion  When part of a pregnancy remains in the womb after an abortion.

indigestion  See heartburn.

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.

infectious disease  Diseases caused by germs or parasites that can be spread from one person to another.

infertility  When a woman has had sex regularly during her fertile time for one year but has been unable to get pregnant. A woman with repeated miscarriages is also considered infertile.

infibulation  A form of female genital cutting in which the outside genitals are cut away and the opening to the vagina is sewn almost closed. Deinfibulation is when it is reopened for childbirth.

inheritance  The possessions, property, or money a person receives after someone dies.

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

inner folds  The part of a woman's genitals that lie just inside the hairy outer folds of the vulva. The inner folds are soft flaps of skin without hair that are sensitive to touch.

intestines  The guts or tube-like part of the food canal that carries food and finally waste from the stomach to the anus.

intimacy  Sharing your private thoughts and feelings with someone.

intramuscular injection (IM)  Injection deep into the muscle.

intra-uterine device (IUD, IUCD)  A small object that is put into the womb to prevent pregnancy.

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

iodine  A mineral found in the ground and some foods that prevents goiter and mental slowness at birth.

iron  A mineral found in some foods that helps make the blood healthy.

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

joints  Places in the body where bones come together.
kidneys  Two large organs in the lower back that make urine by cleaning waste from the blood.

labia  Large and small folds of skin that are part of the vulva.

labor  The work a woman’s body does in childbirth, when her womb squeezes or contracts, causes her cervix to open, and pushes her baby down through the vagina and out of her body.

latex  A material like thin rubber. Condoms and gloves are often made of latex.

latrine  A hole or pit in the ground for passing urine or stool. A toilet.

laxatives  Medicine used for constipation to make stools softer and more frequent.

lice  Tiny insects that attach on the skin or hair of people and other animals.

ligaments  Strong fibers in a person’s body that help hold muscles and bones in place.

literacy  The ability to read and understand written information.

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

loss of consciousness  When a sick or injured person seems to be asleep and cannot be awakened. Unconscious.

lubricants  A slippery cream or jelly used to make dry surfaces wet. Lubricants are often used on condoms during sex.

lymph nodes  Small lumps under the skin in different parts of the body that trap germs. Lymph nodes become swollen and painful when they get infected.

main food  The main food, usually low-cost, that is eaten with almost every meal. This main food usually provides most of the body’s daily food needs. For good nutrition, the body also needs helper foods.

malaria  An infection that causes chills and high fever, which is spread by mosquitoes. The mosquito sucks up the malaria parasites in the blood of an infected person and injects them into the next person it bites.

malnutrition  When the body does not have enough of the foods it needs to stay healthy.

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.

mastitis  See breast infection.

masturbation  Touching one’s own body to bring personal sexual pleasure.

maternal mortality  When a woman dies due to problems from pregnancy and birth.

medical abortion  Using certain medicines to end a pregnancy.

membranes  A thin layer of skin or tissue that either covers organs inside the body or lines other parts. An example is the sac that surrounds and protects the baby when it is in the mother’s womb.

menopause  When a woman’s monthly bleeding stops forever.

menstrual cycle  See monthly cycle.

menstruation  See monthly bleeding.

microscope  An instrument that makes very tiny objects look larger.

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

migraines  Severe headaches with blurred eyesight.

minerals  Substances in foods—like iron, calcium, and iodine—that help the body fight disease and recover after injury or illness.

miscarriage  When a woman loses a developing baby before it is old enough to survive outside the womb.

monthly bleeding (menstruation, monthly period)  When a bloody fluid leaves a woman’s womb and passes through the vagina and out of her body. It happens about every 28 days and lasts for a few days.
monthly cycle  The period of time between the beginning of one monthly bleeding and the beginning of the next. About 2 weeks after a woman starts her monthly bleeding one of her ovaries releases an egg, and about 2 weeks after that she starts another monthly bleeding.

monthly period  See monthly bleeding.

morning sickness  See nausea.

mucous method  When a woman checks the mucus in her vagina every day to find out when she is most fertile.

mucus A thick, slippery wetness that the body makes to protect the inside of the vagina, nose, throat, stomach, and intestines.

mumps  A contagious disease caused by a virus and common in children. Mumps can be prevented by vaccination.

natural methods (of family planning)  Methods of preventing pregnancy that do not require any devices or chemicals.

nausea  When a person feels sick to her stomach, as though she wants to vomit. This often happens to women during the first 3 or 4 months of pregnancy. Also called “morning sickness.”

nipple  The center of the dark-colored part on the outside of the breast where milk comes out.

nutrition  Good nutrition is eating enough food and the right kind of food so the body can grow, be healthy, and fight off disease.

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

oral sex  When a person uses his or her mouth on a partner’s genitals to give the partner sexual pleasure.

organ  A part of the body that is more or less complete in itself and does a specific job. For example, the lungs are organs for breathing.

orgasm  See climax.

osteoporosis  Weak, brittle bones that break easily. Osteoporosis is more common in older women, because they produce less estrogen after menopause.

outer folds  The fatty lips of the vulva that protect the outside genitals and close up when the legs are together.

ovaries  Small sacs about the size of an almond or grape, one on each side of the womb. Ovaries produce eggs that join with a man’s sperm to make a baby.

overdose  Taking too much of a drug or medicine at one time. This can cause serious injury or death.

ovulation  When an egg is released from one of the ovaries during the middle of a woman’s monthly cycle.

oxygen  A chemical in the air that is necessary for life.

Pap test  A test in which some skin cells are scraped from the cervix during a pelvic exam and then examined under a microscope to see if there are any early warning signs of cancer.

paralysis  Loss of the ability to move part or all of the body.

parasites  Tiny worms and animals that can live in a person (or animal) and cause disease.

peer counselor  Someone who is trained to talk with another person who is in a similar situation. For example, one young woman may counsel another young woman, or someone who used to drink too much may counsel another person who is trying to quit.

pelvic area  Everything between a woman’s hips. This is where a woman’s reproductive parts are.

pelvic exam  An examination of a woman’s genitals both inside and outside her body. A pelvic exam sometimes includes a speculum exam.

pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)  An infection of the reproductive parts in a woman’s lower abdomen. Also called pelvic infection.
penis  The male sex organ, also used to pass urine. The penis gets hard during sex and releases a fluid called semen that contains sperm.

pension fund  A fund—often set up by a union, employer, or the government—that pays people when they get older and stop working.

PEP  The short-term use of antiretroviral medicines to prevent health workers accidently exposed to HIV, or women who have been raped, from getting HIV.

period  See monthly bleeding.

permanent methods (of family planning)  See sterilization.

pesticides  Poisonous chemicals used to kill insects that destroy food crops.

PID  See pelvic inflammatory disease.

piles (hemorrhoids)  Swollen veins around the anus, which can itch, burn, or bleed.

pimp  A man who finds clients for a sex worker and who often keeps all or part of her money.

pimple  A spot or small infected swelling that grows, often on the face, due to extra oil on the skin. Common in adolescent girls and boys. Also called acne.

placenta (afterbirth)  A spongy organ in a woman’s womb that passes 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.

PMTCT  The use of antiretroviral medicines to prevent the HIV infection passing from mother to baby during pregnancy and birth. PMTCT Programs can also help mothers with other medicines, nutrition, and counselling.

pneumonia  An infection of the small breathing tubes deep in the lungs.

polyps  Growths found usually in the womb. Polyps are almost never caused by cancer.

pregnancy in the tube  A pregnancy that grows in one of the fallopian tubes, instead of in the womb.

prenatal  The time between when a woman gets pregnant and when she gives birth.

prenatal care  Checkups during pregnancy, when a midwife or specially trained health worker examines a pregnant woman to make sure the pregnancy is going well.

premature  When a baby is born too early.

prevent  Stopping something before it starts.

pressure sores (bed sores)  Sores that form over bony parts of the body when a person lies or sits on that part of the body for too long without moving.

privacy  When a person gives information to a health worker, nurse, or doctor and knows it will not be overheard by, or repeated to, others.

progesterone  A female hormone.

progesterin  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.

progesterin only pill  A method of family planning that contains one hormone—progesterin—but no estrogen.

prolapsed uterus  When the muscles that hold up the womb become weak, causing it to fall or drop down into the vagina.

prostitute  See sex worker.

proteins  Body-building foods necessary for proper growth and strength.

puberty  The time when a girl changes into a woman and her monthly bleeding begins, or when a boy changes into a man.

pubic bone  The front part of the pelvic bones, just beneath the hair on a woman’s genitals.

pulse  The heartbeat, which tells how fast and how hard the heart is working. The pulse can be felt at certain points on the body, like the inside of the wrist or the neck.

purification  Killing harmful germs in water before drinking it.

pus  White or yellow fluid that is filled with germs, often found inside an infected tear or wound.
radiation  Rays of energy given off by certain elements. Radiation is harmful because it kills cells in the body. But it can also be used to treat cancer by killing cancer cells.

radiation treatment  When a machine sends rays of energy into a person's body to kill cancer cells. The rays cannot be seen or felt.

rape  When a man puts his penis, finger, or any object into a woman's vagina, anus, or mouth without her consent.

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.

rectum  The lower part of the intestine that is connected to the anus.

rehydration drink  A drink to treat dehydration. The drink can be made with boiled water, salt, sugar, or powdered cereal.

reproductive health  Health services like family planning services or prenatal care, that help prevent or treat health concerns connected to a woman's reproductive parts.

reproductive parts  The parts of a man's and a woman's body that allow them to make a baby.

resistance  The ability of something to defend itself against something that would normally harm or kill it. Many bacteria and viruses can become resistant to the effects of medicines like antibiotics and antiretrovirals so these treatments no longer work against disease.

rubella (German measles)  A disease spread by a virus that can harm a baby growing in the womb.

rhythm method  See counting days method.

safer sex  Avoiding direct contact with a sexual partner's genitals, blood, semen, or vaginal wetness.

saliva  A person's spit.

sanitation  Public cleanliness to prevent disease, such as providing clean drinking water and keeping public places free of waste.

scabies  A contagious skin disease caused by a parasite.

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.

seizure  See convulsion.

self-esteem  How a woman feels about herself, and about her role in her family and community.

semen  The liquid containing a man's sperm, which is released from his penis during ejaculation.

sepsis  A serious infection that has spread into the blood.

sex worker  Anyone who exchanges sex for money or other favors, goods or services.

sexual abuse  See abuse.

sexual assault  Unwanted sexual contact.

sexual harassment  Unwanted sexual attention from anyone who has power over a woman.

sexual health  When a woman has control over her sexual life.

sexual intercourse  Sex with the penis in the vagina.

sexual roles  The way a community defines what it means to be a woman or a man.

sexually transmitted infections (STIs)  Infections passed from one person to another during sex.

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.

speculum  A small metal or plastic tool that holds the vagina open.

sperm  Tiny organisms in a man's semen that can swim up a woman's vagina and fertilize an egg. This is how a pregnancy starts.
spermicide  A contraceptive cream, gel or foam that helps prevent pregnancy by killing sperm.
squeezing exercise  An exercise to help strengthen weak muscles that cause a woman to pass urine often or to leak urine.
status  The importance a person has in her or his family and community. Or whether a person has HIV (positive status) or not (negative status).
STIs  See sexually transmitted infections.
sterile  When something is completely free from germs.
sterilization  A permanent way of making a woman or man unable to have children.
steroids  A class of medicines used to treat many different health problems. Steroids can have serious side effects if used for a long time.
stethoscope  An instrument used to listen to sounds inside the body, like the heartbeat.
stomach  The sac-like organ in the belly where food is digested.
stool  The waste that passes from the anus during a bowel movement.
stress  Any 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 or vein.
sugar  Sweet foods, like honey or sugar cane, that give energy.
support groups  When people with a common problem meet together to help one another.
surgery  When a doctor cuts into the body to find out what is wrong or to treat an illness. An operation.
syphilis  A sexually transmitted infection.
syringe  An instrument used to inject medicine.
tampons  Cotton, cloth, or sponges that are put inside the vagina to catch monthly bleeding before it leaves the body.
temperature  The degree of heat of a person's body.
testicles  The part of the male genitals that is inside the scrotum and makes the sperm.
testosterone  The main hormone in a man's body.
tetanus  A serious disease caused by a germ that lives in the stools of people or animals. Tetanus enters the body through a wound.
thrush  A fungal infection that causes white patches and soreness on the skin inside the mouth, on the tongue, and the tube that connects the mouth with the stomach.
thyroid gland  A gland in the front of the throat that makes hormones that affect growth and development. The thyroid needs iodine to work properly.
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  See eclampsia.
toxic  A harmful substance that can cause disease or death when it enters the body is said to be toxic.
toxicity  When a person takes too much medicine and it builds up to a dangerous level in the body.
traditional healers  Healers who use methods based on beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation.
trauma  When something horrible happens to a person or to someone the person is close to.
trichomonas  A disease of the genitals that is passed during sex.
tubal ligation  An operation in which the fallopian tubes are cut or tied so the egg cannot travel to the womb to be fertilized.
tubal pregnancy  See pregnancy in the tube.
tuberculosis  A serious *infection* caused by a *germ* that usually affects the *lungs*.

tubes  See *fallopian tubes*.

tumor  Abnormal growth.

ulcer  A *chronic* open sore of the skin, the *stomach*, or the *intestines*.

ultrasound  A machine that uses sound to take a picture of the inside of the body without cutting it open. It is often used during pregnancy to see the baby inside the *womb*.

unconscious  See *loss of consciousness*.

unsafe sex  Direct contact with a sexual partner's *genitals*, blood, semen or *vaginal* wetness—if there is any chance you or your partner has a *sexually transmitted infection* (STI).

urethra  A short tube that carries *urine* from the *bladder* to the hole a person urinates from.

urine  Liquid waste that collects in the *bladder* and leaves the body through a hole just above the *vagina*.

uristix  Special paper strips that change color when dipped in *urine* that has sugar in it. Uristix can be used to find out if a person has *diabetes*.

uterus  See *womb*.

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

vagina (birth canal)  A tube made of muscle that goes from the opening of the woman's *genitals* to the *cervix*.

varicose veins  Abnormally swollen *veins*—often blue, lumpy, and winding—on the legs of older people, pregnant women, and women who have had a lot of children. Pregnant women also sometimes have varicose veins in the *genitals*.

vasectomy  A permanent method of preventing pregnancy, in which the tubes that carry *sperm* from the *testicles* to the *penis* are cut.

veins  Thin, tube-like vessels that carry blood back to the heart. Also see *artery*.

virgin  A person who has not had sex.

virus  *Germs* smaller than *bacteria*, which cause some *infectious diseases*.

visual inspection  A method of screening women for *cancer* of the *cervix*. A vinegar solution (acetic acid) is painted on the cervix and turns abnormal tissue white.

vitamins  Foods that the body needs to work properly, to fight disease, and to get better after a sickness or injury.

vomiting  Throwing up the contents of the *stomach* through the mouth.

vulva  All the parts of a woman's *genitals* that can be seen on the outside of her body between her legs.

withdrawal  The period of time in which the body gets used to being without a *drug* or alcohol to which it is physically *addicted*.

womb (uterus)  A sac of strong muscle inside a woman's belly. *Monthly bleeding* comes from the womb, and the baby grows inside the womb during pregnancy.

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

yeast infection  A vaginal *infection* with white, lumpy *discharge*, itching, and burning. These infections are common during pregnancy and when taking *antibiotics*. 