

# MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

## GLOSSARY

# A

**Apgar test:** A test that assesses a baby's overall health at birth by scoring the baby on five different attributes: heart rate, respiration, muscle tone, reflex responsiveness, and skin tone (e.g., whether the baby is "pinking up" or is still a little bit blue). The test is performed twice: at one minute after birth, and at five minutes after birth.

**Amniotic fluid:** The protective liquid consisting mostly of water that surrounds the baby inside the amniotic sac.

**Anencephaly:** A birth defect involving a malformed brain and skull. Anencephaly leads to stillbirth or death soon after birth.

**Anomaly:** A malformation or abnormality in any part of the body. Some anomalies are relatively minor; others can be serious, even fatal.

**Areola:** The flat pigmented area encircling the nipple of the breast.

**Asthma:** A lung condition that causes the air passages to become narrowed as a result of muscular spasms and swelling of the air passage walls.

**Axillary temperature:** A temperature reading that is taken by placing a thermometer in the armpit.

# B

**Balanoposthitis:** Inflammation of the foreskin of the penis caused either by trauma or poor hygiene.

**Bilirubin:** A substance that is released as a newborn baby's body attempts to get rid of some of the excess red blood cells that he was born with.

**Boils:** Raised, red, tender, warm swellings on the skin that are most often found on the buttocks.

**Breast abscess:** A condition in which pus accumulates in one area of the breast.

**Breast engorgement:** When the breasts become swollen and full of milk.

**Bronchiolitis:** A viral infection of the small breathing tubes of the lungs.

**Bronchitis:** An infection of the central and larger airways of the lungs.

# C

**Caesarean section:** A surgical procedure used to deliver a baby via an incision made in the mother's abdomen and uterus.

**Café au lait marks:** Permanent tan-coloured patches that can appear at birth or at any point during the first two years of life.



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**Campylobacter:** A common bacterial cause of intestinal infections.

**Capillary hemangioma:** See strawberry hemangioma.

**Cavernous hemangioma:** A reddish or bluish-red birthmark that has a lumpy texture.

**Cellulitis:** Swollen, red, tender, warm areas of skin that are typically found on the extremities or the buttocks and that often start out as a boil or puncture wound prior to becoming infected.

**Chromosomal abnormalities:** Problems that result from errors in the duplication of the chromosomes -the thread-like structures in the nucleus of a cell that transmit genetic information.

**Circumcision:** Surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis.

**Cleft lip:** A condition in which there is a separation of the upper lip that can extend into the nose.

**Cleft palate:** A condition in which the roof of the mouth is incompletely formed.

**Clubfoot:** A condition in which the baby is born with the sole of one or both feet facing either down and inward or up and outward.

**Colostrum:** The first substance secreted from the breasts following childbirth. Colostrum is high in protein and antibodies.

**Congenital anomaly:** An abnormality that is present at birth. A congenital anomaly is acquired during pregnancy but is not necessarily genetic in origin.

**Congenital pigmented nevi:** The common mole.

**Co-sleeping:** Sharing sleep with your baby. If you share a bed, this is known as bed-sharing. If you share a room, this is known as room-sharing.

**Cradle cap:** A relatively common skin condition in the newborn that involves a yellowish, scaly buildup on the baby's head that may also be accompanied by redness in the creases of the skin.

**Croup:** A respiratory condition in which your baby's breathing becomes very noisy. In some cases, his windpipe may become obstructed.

**Cytomegalovirus (CMV):** A group of viruses from the herpes virus family.



**Diastasis recti abdominis:** The separation of the longitudinal abdominal muscles during pregnancy.

**Diphtheria:** A disease that attacks the throat and heart and that can lead to heart failure or death.



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**Dislocated hip:** A condition that occurs when the ball at the head of the thigh bone doesn't fit snugly enough into its socket in the hip bone.

**Doula:** A childbirth or postpartum professional who provides support to a birthing woman or new mother and her family.

**Down syndrome:** A chromosomal abnormality that results in intellectual disability and a variety of medical conditions.

**E** **Early neonatal death:** When a live-born infant dies before the seventh day following birth, this death is classified as an early neonatal death.

**Eclampsia:** A serious but rare condition that can affect pregnant or labouring women. It is a severe form of pre-eclampsia. Symptoms of eclampsia include hypertension, edema, and protein in the urine. An emergency delivery may be necessary if the eclampsia is severe enough.

**Eczema:** Extreme itchiness that results in a rash in areas that are scratched. Eczema can be caused by environmental irritants.

**Encephalitis:** An infection of the brain.

**Engrossment:** The term that is used to describe a new father's fascination with his new baby.

**Epidural:** A local anesthetic that is injected into the epidural space at the level of the spinal cord that you wish to numb. The most common form of pharmacological pain relief during labour. Used for Caesarean sections as well.

**Epiglottitis:** A life-threatening infection that causes swelling in the back of the throat.

**Episiotomy:** An incision made into the skin and the perineal muscle at the time of delivery to enlarge the vaginal opening and make it easier for the baby's head or body to emerge or to insert birthing instruments such as forceps.

**Epispadias:** A condition in which a baby is born with the urethral opening on the upper surface of the penis rather than the tip of the penis. The penis may curve upward.

**Erythema infectiosum:** See fifth disease.

**Erythema toxicum neonatorum:** Red splotches on the skin with yellowish- white bumps in the centre.

**Erythromycin ointment:** Ointment that is applied to a newborn baby's eyes within a couple of hours of the birth.

**F** **Febrile convulsions:** Seizures that may occur when a baby's temperature shoots up very suddenly.



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**Fifth disease:** A common childhood disease that is characterized by a fever and a bright red rash on the cheeks plus a red rash on the trunk and extremities. Also called erythema infectiosum.

**Fontanelles:** The two so-called soft spots that can be found in the centre and toward the back of a newborn baby's head.

**Forceps:** A tong-like instrument that may be placed around a baby's head to help guide the baby out of the birth canal during an instrumental vaginal delivery. Today, forceps are used less often than vacuum extraction (suction).

**Foremilk:** The milk that your breasts produce at the beginning of a feeding.

**Frenulum:** The piece of tissue that joins the bottom of the tongue to the floor of the mouth.



**Gastroesophageal reflux:** The movement of stomach contents up the esophagus.

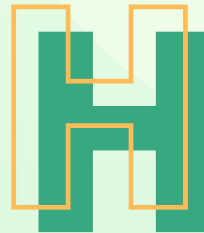
**German measles:** See rubella.

**Gestational diabetes:** Diabetes that is triggered by pregnancy.

**Giardia:** A parasite in the stool that causes bowel infections.

**Group B streptococcus:** Bacteria found in the vagina and rectum of approximately 15 percent

of pregnant women. Women who test positive for group B strep may require antibiotics during labour to protect their babies from picking up this potentially life-threatening infection.



**Haemophilus influenzae type b**

**(Hib):** A disease that can lead to meningitis, pneumonia, and a severe throat infection that can cause choking (epiglottitis).

**Hand, foot, and mouth disease:** A common childhood disease that is characterized by tiny blister-like sores in the mouth, on the palms of the hands, and on the soles of the feet. The sores are accompanied by a mild fever, a sore throat, and painful swallowing.

**Hemorrhoids:** Swollen blood vessels around the anus or in the rectal canal which may bleed and cause pain, especially after childbirth.

**Herpangina:** An inflammation of the inside of the mouth.

**Hindmilk:** The milk that your breasts produce toward the end of a feeding.

**Hydrocephalus:** An excessive increase in the fluid that cushions the brain - something that can result in brain damage.

**Hypertension:** High blood pressure.

**Hypoglycemia:** Low blood sugar.



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**Hypospadias:** A condition in which a baby is born with the urethral opening on the underside of the glans of the penis. The penis may curve downward.

**Hypothyroidism:** A condition caused by an inadequate thyroid gland. If undetected or untreated, it can lead to intellectual disability.

**Imperforate anus:** When the anus is sealed, either because there is a tiny membrane of skin over the opening to the anus or because the anal canal failed to develop properly.

**Impetigo:** An infection of the skin that is characterized by yellow pustules or wide, honey-coloured scabs.

**Intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR):** When the baby's growth is less than what would normally be expected for a baby of that gestational age. It can be symmetric (e.g., both the head and the body are small) or asymmetric (e.g., just the body is small).

**Kangaroo care:** Skin-to-skin contact between parent and baby.

**Kegels:** Exercises that are designed to work the muscles of the pelvic floor, including those of the urethra, vagina, and rectum.

of pregnant women. Women who test positive for group B strep may require antibiotics during labour to protect their babies from picking up this potentially life-threatening infection.

**Lactation consultant:** A health-care professional who is an expert on breastfeeding.

**Lactiferous ducts:** The canals in your breasts that transport the milk to your nipples.

**Lactiferous sinuses:** The milk pools in your breasts.

**Lanugo:** Soft, downy hair that covers parts of the body of a newborn baby.

**Late neonatal death:** A live-born infant who dies on or after the seventh day following birth, but before the twenty-eighth day following birth.

**Lochia:** The discharge of blood, mucus, and tissue from the uterus following childbirth. Lochia can last anywhere from a few weeks to six weeks or longer. It tends to be heaviest right after the birth and may contain large clots-some as large as a small lemon.

**Low birth weight:** Babies who weigh less than 5 pounds 8 ounces (2,500 grams) at birth. A baby who weighs less than 3 pounds (1,500 grams) at birth is considered to be a



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very low birth weight baby.



**Mastitis:** A painful infection of the breast characterized by fever, soreness, and swelling.

**Meconium:** The greenish-black tar-like substance that fills a baby's intestines before birth.

**Meningitis:** An inflammation of the membranes covering the brain and the spinal cord.

**Milia:** Tiny white bumps that resemble whiteheads. They appear to be raised, but they are actually flat and smooth to the touch, and are typically found on a baby's nose, forehead, and cheeks.

**Miliaria:** A raised rash that consists of small, fluid-filled blisters.

**Milk-ejection reflex:** A reflex triggered by the hormone oxytocin that causes the band-like muscles around the milk-production cells in your breast to contract, forcing the milk through your inner canal system and into your nipples, where it can be obtained by your baby. Also called the let-down reflex.

**Mongolian spots:** Greenish or bluish birthmarks that are caused by temporary accumulations of pigment under the skin.

**Moro reflex (startle reflex):** A newborn baby's instinctive reaction to any loud noise or sudden movement. He arches his back, throws open his arms and his legs, and may start to cry before pulling back his arms again.

**Moulding:** Temporary changes to the shape of a baby's head caused by pressure on the baby's skull during a vertex (head-first) vaginal delivery.

**Mumps:** An illness that is characterized by flu-like symptoms and an upset stomach followed by tender swollen glands beneath the earlobes two or three days later.



**Nasogastric tube:** A tube that extends through the baby's nose or mouth and into the baby's stomach.

**Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC):** A disease in which intestinal tissue dies.

**Neonatal death:** The death of a live-born infant between birth and four weeks of age.

**Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU):** An intensive care unit that specializes in the care of premature, low birth-weight babies and seriously ill infants.

**Neonatal urticaria:** Red spots on the skin with yellowish centres that form because a



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baby's skin and pores are not yet working efficiently. More commonly known as newborn acne.

**Neural-tube defects:** Abnormalities in the development of the spinal cord and brain in a fetus, including anencephaly, hydrocephalus, and spina bifida.

**Newborn jaundice:** The yellowish tinge of a newborn's skin caused by too much bilirubin in the blood. Jaundice typically develops on the second or third day of life and lasts until the baby is seven to ten days old. Newborn jaundice can usually be corrected by special light treatment

**NICU:** See neonatal intensive care unit.

**Nursing strike:** A breastfed baby's sudden refusal to nurse.

**Oral pseudomembranous candidiasis:**

See thrush.

**Otitis media:** An ear infection.

**Oxytocin:** The naturally occurring hormone that causes uterine contractions and is responsible for triggering the milk-ejection reflex.

**Paraphimosis:** An emergency situation that can occur if the foreskin gets stuck when it's first retracted.

**Parentese:** A form of speech that parents around the world use when communicating with their babies. It involves exaggerated speech and high-pitched voices.

**Pathological jaundice:** A serious form of jaundice that occurs within 24 hours of the birth and that may have to be treated with a blood transfusion. It is usually the result of Rh-incompatibility between mother and baby.

**Pelvic floor muscles:** The group of muscles at the base of the pelvis that helps support the bladder, uterus, urethra, vagina, and rectum.

**Perineum:** The name given to the muscle and tissue located between the vagina and the rectum.

**Pertussis:** See whooping cough.

**Phenylketonuria (PKU):** A recessive genetic disorder in which a liver enzyme is defective, making it impossible for an individual to digest an amino acid known as phenylalanine. PKU is detected through a blood test done at birth and may be controlled by a special diet. If untreated, PKU results in intellectual disability.

**Phimosis:** A condition in which the foreskin and the penis are fused together.

**Phototherapy:** A method of treating jaundice that involves exposing the baby's skin to a special type of light that helps his body



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dissolve the extra pigment in the skin.

**Physiological jaundice:** A form of jaundice that typically occurs in three- to five-day-old babies and that disappears as the baby's liver matures.

**Pinworms:** Intestinal worms.

**Placenta:** The organ that develops in the uterus during pregnancy, providing nutrients for the fetus and eliminating its waste products.

**Pneumonia:** An infection of the lungs.

**Polio:** A disease that can result in muscle pain and paralysis and/or death.

**Port wine stains:** Large, flat, irregularly shaped red or purple caused by a surplus of blood vessels under the skin.

**Postpartum blues:** The hormone-driven wave of emotion that tends to come crashing down on about 80 per cent of new mothers three to five days after giving birth, leading to temporary, mild depression. This type of depression tends to last only a few days. If the feelings of depression last longer than this or are particularly severe, a mother may be suffering from postpartum depression.

**Postpartum depression (PPD):** Clinical depression that can occur at any point during the year following the delivery. Postpartum depression is characterized by sadness, impatience, restlessness, and – in particularly

severe cases-an inability to care for the baby.

Severe cases in which the mother suffers hallucinations or a desire to hurt the baby are classified as postpartum psychosis.

**Postpartum doula:** A caregiver who provides hands-on assistance to new parents during the early days postpartum.

**Postpartum hemorrhage:** The loss of more than 450 millilitres (15 ounces) of blood during a vaginal delivery or 1 litre (4 cups) during a Caesarean section.

**Pre-eclampsia:** A serious medical condition during pregnancy that is characterized by sudden edema, high blood pressure, and protein in the urine.

**Pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH):** A pregnancy-related condition in which a woman's blood pressure is temporarily elevated. Her blood pressure returns to normal shortly after she gives birth.

**Premature baby:** A baby born before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

**Preterm birth:** A birth that occurs two weeks before the baby was due and that results in an infant who weighs less than 5 pounds 8 ounces (2,500 grams).

**Primary lactation failure:** A rare condition that is typically diagnosed if you fail to





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experience any breast changes during pregnancy.

**Projectile vomiting:** A condition in which a large amount of food is forcibly ejected from a baby's stomach.

**Prolactin:** The hormone responsible for milk production and for suppressing ovulation in a nursing mother. Prolactin is released following the delivery of the placenta and the membranes.

**Pustular melanosis:** Small blisters that quickly dry up and peel away, leaving dark, freckle-like spots underneath.

**Pyloric stenosis:** A partial blockage of the passage leading from the stomach to the small intestine. It is characterized by projectile vomiting, constipation, and/or dehydration.

# R

**Renal disease:** Kidney disease.

**Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV):** A respiratory infection that results in a raspy cough, rapid breathing, and wheezing.

**Rheumatic fever:** A serious disease that can result in heart damage and/or joint swelling.

**Ringworm:** An itchy and flaky rash that may be ring-shaped with a raised edge.

**Rooting reflex:** A newborn baby's instinctive ability to root for a nipple to latch on to if her

mouth is touched or her cheek is stroked on one side.

# S

**Scarlet fever:** See strep throat.

**Scrotum:** The pouch of skin and thin muscle tissue that holds the testes.

**Seborrhoeic dermatitis:** See cradle cap.

**Separation anxiety:** A baby's fear of being separated from the person or persons he cares most about.

**Sepsis:** A serious infection caused by bacteria that has entered a wound or body tissue. Commonly known as "blood poisoning."

**Shigella:** An illness that is caused by a virus in the stool that can be spread from person to person.

**Shingles:** A disease that is characterized by a rash with small blisters that begin to crust over, resulting in itching and intense and prolonged pain.

**Single gene abnormalities:** Genetic problems that are inherited from one or both parents.

**Skin tags:** Small, soft, flesh-coloured or pigmented growths of skin.

**Social referencing:** When a baby looks to his parents for information and guidance.

**Soft spot:** See fontanelles.



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**Spider nevi:** Thin, dilated blood vessels that are spider-like in shape and that radiate outward from a central red spot.

**Spina bifida:** A condition in which the spinal column fails to close properly during the early weeks of embryonic development. It can result in hydrocephalus, muscle weakness or paralysis, and bowel and bladder problems.

**Stale air:** Air that has been previously breathed in. A key reason for removing stuffed animals and blankets from a baby's bed is to prevent the baby's face from being covered, which would result in the baby re-breathing stale air. It is believed that re-breathing stale air triggers a complex series of biochemical processes in an infant that increases the risk of SIDS.

**Startle reflex:** See Moro reflex.

**Stem cells:** The bone marrow components that are responsible for producing red cells, white cells, and platelets.

**Stork bites:** Pinkish, irregularly shaped patches of skin that are typically found at the nape of the neck or on the face, although they can also be found on other parts of the body.

**Stranger anxiety:** A baby's fear of strangers.

**Strawberry hemangioma:** Raised reddish-blue birthmarks that occur when an area of the skin develops an abnormal blood supply.

**Strep throat:** A bacterial infection that is characterized by a very sore throat, a fever, and swollen glands in the neck. If a skin rash is also present, the condition is known as scarlet fever.

**Stretch marks:** Reddish streaks on the skin of the breasts, abdomen, legs, and buttocks that are caused by the stretching of the skin during pregnancy. Stretch marks fade over time but they don't disappear entirely.

**Stridor:** Noisy or laboured breathing. Stridor occurs when a baby is breathing in and may be associated with croup.

**Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS):** The sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant under one year of age that remains unexplained after all known and possible causes have been ruled out through autopsy, death scene investigation, and review of the medical history.



**Tetanus:** A disease that can lead to muscle spasms and death.

**Thrush:** A breastfeeding-related yeast infection that affects both mother and baby.

**Tongue-tied:** A condition that occurs when the stringy, fibrous membrane that connects the lower part of the tongue to the floor



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of the mouth (see frenulum) may be too tight to allow the baby's tongue to extend far enough forward to take hold of the nipple during breastfeeding.

**Tonic neck reflex:** A newborn baby's instinctive tendency to turn his head to one side and extend the arm and leg on that same side in a classic fencing position if placed on his back. Sometimes referred to as the fencer's reflex.

**Toxoplasmosis:** A parasitic infection that can cause stillbirth or miscarriage in pregnant women and congenital defects in babies.

**Transitional milk:** The milk that your breasts produce after they are finished producing colostrum but before they are ready to produce mature milk.

**Tympanic temperature:** A temperature reading that is taken using a tympanic (ear) thermometer.

**U** **Umbilical cord:** The cord that connects the placenta to the developing baby, removing waste products and carbon dioxide from the baby and bringing oxygenated blood and nutrients from the mother through the placenta to the baby.

**Umbilical hernia:** A small swelling close to the

belly button that becomes more prominent when a baby is crying.

**Undescended testicles:** Testicles that have not yet descended from the abdomen into the scrotum by the time a baby boy is born.

**Uterus:** The mother's hollow muscular organ that protects and nourishes the fetus prior to birth.



**V** **Vacuum extraction:** A process in which a suction cup is attached to a vacuum pump placed on a baby's head to aid in delivery.

**Varicella zoster immune globulin:** A type of immune globulin that is given to prevent or minimize the severity of chicken pox.

**Vascular disease:** Heart disease.

**Ventricular septum:** The dividing wall between the right and left pumping chambers of the heart.

**Vernix caseosa:** A greasy white substance that coats and protects the baby's skin before birth.



**W** **Whooping cough:** A disease that is characterized by a severe cough that makes it difficult to breathe,



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eat, or drink. Whooping cough can lead to pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage, and death.

