

Glossary of terms relating to Gynaecology

Abdomen	The area of your body from the lower ribs to the pelvis.
Acute	Sudden and severe.
Adenomyosis	Tissue similar to endometriosis in the muscle wall of the uterus.
Adhesions	Scar tissue joining two or more body structures together. The structures would usually be separate.
Bacterial vaginosis (BV)	A very common cause of vaginal discharge and discomfort. A bacterial imbalance in the vagina causes it. It is not sexually transmitted and does not affect men.
Biopsy	When a small sample of tissue is taken from your body for further testing.
CA-125	A blood marker that is measured from a blood sample. The level can increase in ovarian cancer, endometriosis, pregnancy and infection.
Cell	The smallest building blocks which make up the organs and tissues of the body.
Cervix	The entrance of the uterus found at the top of the vagina .
Chlamydia trachomatis	A sexually transmitted infection which is easily treated with antibiotics. Both men and women can be affected, and both partners require treatment. If not treated quickly, this infection can damage the reproductive system.
Chronic	Something that continues for at least six months.
Clinical guidelines	Statements based on properly researched evidence created to help healthcare professionals and patients make decisions about medical care and treatments.
Colposcope	A specially designed microscope used to see the cervix in detail during colposcopy. It has a light attached and stays outside of the body.
Colposcopist, colposcopy nurse specialist or nurse colposcopist	A doctor or nurse who has completed specialised training to perform colposcopy.
Colposcopy	A clinic-based examination used to diagnose, monitor and treat cervical cell changes.
Complications	Unintentional problems that develop after an operation, treatment or illness.
Consultant (Specialist)	This title is given to doctors who have completed their training in an area of medical specialty, for example, gynaecology, anaesthetics or radiology. The training is done in a recognised college, such as the Royal Australasian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Consultants are also called specialists.
Diathermy	The safe use of electrical current to destroy body tissue or stop bleeding.
Dysmenorrhoea	Painful periods.
Dyspareunia	Pain during or after sexual intercourse.
Endometriosis	A condition where cells of the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) are found outside the uterus. Usually, this is found in the pelvis but can be further away in the body, including the bowel.
Endometrium	The lining of the womb (uterus).

Fellow	A “fellow” is a qualified doctor with years of experience as a registrar. This kind of position is given to doctors who want to consolidate and improve their skills before becoming a specialist consultant. Often fellowship positions are in an area of subspecialty, for example, urogynaecology or laparoscopic surgery.
Fibroids	Very common non-cancerous growths that develop in the muscle (myometrium) of the womb (uterus). Fibroids are sometimes known as uterine myomas or leiomyomas, and only need treatment if they cause problems.
House officer (house surgeon)	A qualified doctor who is at the earlier stages of their hospital career. From this point, house officers gain the experience they need to decide their area of interest in medicine. After around two years, most will become registrars or begin their GP training.
HRT	Hormone replacement therapy uses human-made hormones to treat symptoms related to low levels of hormones in the body.
Hysterectomy	An operation to remove the cervix and womb . The ovaries can be removed at the same time, if necessary.
Hysteroscopy and endometrial biopsy	A small operation where a camera is placed through the cervix. This allows a sample of the lining of the womb (endometrium) to be taken for further testing.
Incontinence	Not having full control over the bladder and/or bowel.
Informed decision/choice	Making a decision about your medical care after being given enough information. This information must be balanced, up to date, evidence-based and given in a way that you can understand.
Laparoscopy	Keyhole surgery involving small cuts in the abdomen. A camera (called a laparoscope) is placed into the body to allow diagnosis or treatment.
Laparotomy	Open surgery involving a cut in your abdomen. The surgeon will use their hands inside your body to perform the treatment.
Large loop excision of the transformation zone or LLETZ	A common treatment for cervical cell changes that uses a loop-shaped wire to remove the affected area. Electrical current is used to both cut and control bleeding.
Medical student	A University Student studying to become a doctor.
Menopause	The time when a woman’s periods have stopped, usually around 50 years of age. See also menstrual cycle .
Menstrual cycle	The monthly process in which an egg develops and the lining of the womb is prepared for a possible pregnancy. If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of the womb (the endometrium) is shed. This is known as a period or menstruation. Hormones control the cycle, and on average, a cycle lasts 28 days.
Ovaries	The two organs found in a woman’s pelvis which produce eggs.
Ovulation	The process by which the ovaries produce and release an egg each month. Ovulation usually takes place around 10–16 days before a period.
Pelvic floor muscles	A group of muscles which support the organs in the pelvis . They are part of your core muscles and help keep you continent.
Peritoneum	The tissue that lines the abdominal wall and covers most of the organs in the abdomen. It produces fluid to keep your organs healthy and contains lots of nerve endings.

Pipelle biopsy	A procedure done in clinic to check the endometrium (lining of the uterus). A small plastic tube is passed through the cervix, and suction is used to take a tiny sample.
Registrar	Registrars are qualified doctors with more experience than house officers. They are gaining experience in their chosen area of specialty. Some are getting ready to apply for their specialty training scheme, and some are already in a training scheme.
Risk	The chance of harm. Risk is generally given in terms of odds (1 in 10) or percentages (10%).
Specialist (consultant)	This title is given to doctors who have completed their training in an area of medical specialty, for example, gynaecology, anaesthetics or radiology. The training is done in a recognised college, such as the Royal Australasian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Specialists are sometimes referred to as consultants.
Speculum	A specially designed instrument placed through the vagina to show or reach the cervix.
Symptom	The sensations or feelings patients describe that may indicate a condition, illness or disease.
Transvaginal scan	A scan where a probe is placed inside the vagina . This allows clear pictures of the pelvis.
Ultrasound scan	A scan where sound waves are used to provide images of the body, tissues and internal organs.
Uterus (also known as womb)	The female pelvic organ where a baby can develop. It sits between the bladder and the rectum in a woman's pelvis .
Vagina	The canal leading from the vulva to the cervix .
Vaginal swab	Where a long cotton bud is used to take a sample of vaginal discharge. This can be used to check for infection.
Vulva	The outside area surrounding the opening of the vagina. It includes the inner and outer vaginal lips (the labia) and the clitoris .