Common Terms of Pregnancy and Birth

Pregnancy and birth come with many new words and expressions. Here is a list of some of the most common.

**Antepartum (AP)**
Before the birth.

**Appropriate for gestational age (AGA)**
Baby's size is as expected for how far along you are.

**Artificial rupture of membranes (AROM)**
Health care provider inserts a special hook through the cervix and makes a hole in the membranes, releasing amniotic fluid. Also known as "breaking the bag of waters."

**Bag of waters**
Sac of amniotic fluid surrounding the baby inside the uterus.

**Birth verification letter**
A temporary substitute for a birth certificate. It is valid up to 60 days after your baby's birth date.

**Breastfeeding**
Mother feeding her baby with milk from her breasts.

**Cervical exam**
Health care provider uses fingers to check the cervix for:
- Position of cervix (posterior – to the back, or anterior – forward, to the mother's front).
- Ripeness (softness or hardness of the cervix).
- Dilation (amount open).
- Effacement (amount thick or thin, shortening of the cervix).
- Station (how low in the pelvis the baby has descended).
**Cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD)**
The baby's head is too large, the mother's pelvic structure is too small, or a combination of the two. Rarely diagnosed before labor. Sometimes can be related to a baby lying in the persistent occiput posterior position (the back of the baby's head is toward the mother's back) or asynclitism (baby's head tilted so that it does not fit through the pelvis). Leads to a Cesarean section birth.

**Child Protective Services (CPS)**
A state agency that protects babies and children.

**Cesarean section or C-section (CS)**
A surgical procedure used to deliver the baby through incisions in the abdomen and uterus; used if labor or vaginal birth is difficult or dangerous for the mother or baby; also used if mother has had a CS before.

**Certified nurse midwife**
A registered nurse who has completed one or more years of advanced training in midwifery. They take care of women with uncomplicated, normal pregnancies and births.

**Cervix**
Lowest part, or neck, of the uterus that ends in the back of the vagina or birth canal.

**Date of birth (DOB)**
Mother's or baby's birthday; most times includes the month, day, and year.

**Doppler**
A handheld device placed on abdomen that makes it possible to hear the fetal heartbeat.

**Estimated date of confinement (EDC)**
The expected due date of the baby, figured for a 40-week pregnancy from the mother's last menstrual period.
**Electronic fetal monitoring** (EFM)
The mother has two sensing devices placed on her abdomen. One of these devices picks up the baby's heartbeat; the other picks up changes in uterine tone (which shows contractions).

**Fundus**
The top of the uterus. The health care provider usually measures the fundus at or below the mother's navel soon after the baby is born, and for several days after birth. This is done by feeling the mother’s abdomen. The fundus should feel firm and tight. This measurement is important to control bleeding after delivery.

**Fetal heart rate** (FHR)
Baby's heart rate measured while still in mother's uterus.

**Fetal heart tones**
Baby's heart rate sounds that can be heard with the Doppler or electronic fetal monitoring (EFM).

**Failure to progress** (FTP), **prolonged labor**
Labor is not progressing because the cervix is not dilating or the baby is not descending.

**Group beta streptococcus** (GBS)
A type of bacteria in the vagina, rectum, or urine, which can be passed on to baby during labor; infant would need antibiotics. Mothers are checked before labor for bacteria and get antibiotics during labor, if bacteria are present.

**Infant of a mother with diabetes**
A baby whose mother has diabetes. The baby will be watched closely for signs of low blood sugar the first 24 hours after birth.

**Intrauterine device** (IUD)
Birth control method inserted into the mother's uterus.

**Large for gestational age** (LGA)
Baby's size is larger than normal for the age of the baby.
**Lumbar epidural** (LEP)
Pain medicine used to cause a decrease of sensation (numbness) in a specific region of the body – the lumbar region, or lower back. Used for labor pain (when desired) and for Cesarean section births.

**Last menstrual period** (LMP)
The first day of mother’s last menstrual period. The date is used to figure the baby’s estimated due date.

**Low transverse Cesarean section** (LTCS)
Incision for this type of Cesarean section birth goes across the lower section of mother's uterus, from side to side.

**Meconium** (MEC)
Your baby’s first bowel movement.

**Neonatal Intensive Care Unit** (NICU)
Special care nursery for babies who are premature (born before 37 weeks) or who need specific care or observation.

**Newborn**
Baby.

**Neonatologist**
A pediatrician (baby doctor) who has extra training in the care of infants who are sick or premature (born before 37 weeks).

**Non-stress test** (NST)
External monitoring of fetal heart rate and uterine contractions. Evaluates baby’s well-being.

**Normal spontaneous vaginal delivery** (NSVD)
Birth vaginally, without the use of forceps or vacuum.

**Occipitofrontal circumference**
Measurement of the baby’s head.

**Pediatrician**
A doctor who is trained to work with babies and children.
**Perinatal**
The period around childbirth from the 20th week of gestation to 1 month after birth.

**Perinatologist**
An obstetrician-gynecologist who has received extra training in managing high-risk pregnancies and deliveries.

**Postpartum (PP)**
After the birth.

**Pre-eclampsia**
Elevated blood pressure in the last half of pregnancy accompanied by swelling of face, hands, and feet, and protein in the urine.

**Pregnancy induced hypertension (PIH)**
High blood pressure related to the pregnancy.

**Premature labor (PML)**
Contractions, 6 or more in 1 hour, before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

**Premature rupture of membranes (PROM)**
The “bag of waters,” or amniotic sac, breaks before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

**Prenatal**
During pregnancy and before birth.

**Repeat Cesarean section**
Mother has had a previous Cesarean birth and now is having another Cesarean birth.

**Small for gestational age (SGA)**
Baby’s size is smaller than normal for the age of the baby.

**Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)**
Unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant, usually while asleep or in bed. The cause is not fully understood.

**Spontaneous rupture of membranes (SROM)**
The “bag of waters,” or amniotic sac, breaks on its own; may feel like a big gush or a small trickle of fluid.
Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about yourself, call your obstetric provider during office hours. Clinics are closed 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. and on weekends.

When your provider’s office is closed, call Labor and Delivery: 206-598-4616

*Tocometry* (TOCO)
External monitoring of contractions and baby’s well-being.

*UltraCOM*
Ultrasound Doppler test on the mother that measures her cardiac output. This helps decide the best treatment for high blood pressure.

*Ultrasound*
Use of sound waves through the abdomen to get a picture of the baby’s size, position, age, and well-being in the uterus.

*Vacuum extraction*
Used during the pushing phase of labor, a plastic cap-like device is applied to the baby's head. A tube connects the cap to a vacuum pump that creates suction. During contractions, the provider gently pulls on a handle attached to the cap to assist the baby to come out of the vagina.

*Vaginal exam*
An exam done to look at the inside and outside of the vagina. During the exam, the health care provider uses a gloved hand to gently check the cervix.

Some of the definitions above were taken from the book *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn* by Simkin, Whalley, and Keppler.