The Female Reproductive System – Class Notes

WHAT YOU’LL DO:

- Identify the structures of the female reproductive system.
- Summarize the typical menstrual cycle.
- Describe six problems of the female reproductive system.
- Describe four ways to prevent common female reproductive problems.

TERMS TO LEARN:

- Uterus
- Ovum
- Ovulation
- Endometrium
- Menstruation
- Menstrual Cycle
- Period

The Female Reproductive System:
Stephanie’s older sister Kim got married last year. Kim and her husband decided to have a baby. Stephanie’s little brother asked Stephanie where the baby was inside Kim’s body. Carrying a baby inside her body is one of the functions of the woman’s reproductive system. A developing baby is carried in a pregnant woman’s uterus. The uterus is a muscular organ of the female reproductive system that holds a fetus during pregnancy.

The Female Body:
The woman’s sex cell is called an ovum (plural, ova). The ova, or eggs, are stored in organs called ovaries. The ovaries also make most of the primary female sex hormone, estrogen. An ovum travels from an ovary to the uterus through a fallopian tube. The fallopian tube is not actually attached to the ovary. The ovum is drawn into the fallopian tube and carried toward the uterus by movements of the fallopian tubes. The lower part of the uterus, where the uterus meets the vagina, is the cervix. The vagina connects the outside of the body with the uterus.

Ovulation:
Woman are born with all of the ova they will ever have. Ova contain one half of the woman’s genes. Beginning at puberty, one of the ovaries releases a mature ovum every month in a process called ovulation. An ovary contains ova at various stages of development. When a hormone called FSH is released each month, some of the developing ova are at the right stage to finish maturing. One of these ova will dominate, and the others will be reabsorbed by the body. Then, the woman’s body releases a second
hormone that makes the ovary release the mature ovum. When the ovum is released, the fallopian tube draws the ovum into the tube. The sweeping movement of the tube’s lining causes a current of fluid in the fallopian tube that carries the ovum toward the uterus.

**Menstruation:**
To prepare the uterus for pregnancy, the lining of the uterus thickens every month. The lining of the uterus is called the **endometrium**. If the ovum is fertilized by a sperm cell in the fallopian tube, the fertilized ovum will attach to the wall of the uterus and a pregnancy will begin. If the ovum is not fertilized, the lining of the uterus will be shed. When the lining is shed, blood and tissue leave the body through the vagina. This monthly breakdown and shedding of the endometrium is called **menstruation**. This bleeding is also called a **period**.

Ovulation and menstruation happen in a cycle that lasts about 28 days. This cycle is called the **menstrual cycle**. The length of the menstrual cycle varies from woman to woman. It can be as short as 21 days and as long as 35 days. The length of the menstrual period and the heaviness of the bleeding can be affected by age, stress, diet, exercise, and illness. Girls usually have their first menstrual period between the ages of 9 and 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Days 1 to 5:</strong> The lining of the uterus is shed. Blood and tissue leave the body through the vagina.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Days 1 to 13:</strong> An ovum matures in the ovary.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day 14:</strong> Ovulation – an ovum is released from the ovary.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Days 15 to 28:</strong> The ovum travels down the fallopian tube to the uterus. If the ovum is not fertilized, the cycle will begin again at day 1.</td>
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**Caring for the Female Body:**
Some medical problems can leave girls and women with damage that can affect their bodies for the rest of their lives. Women and girls can protect themselves from reproductive health problems in the following ways:

- Bathe every day. Do not wear damp clothing any longer than is necessary.
- See a doctor regularly. Report any unusual symptoms, including discharge, itching, or pain, to your parents or doctor. Do regular breast self-exams. Your doctor can explain how to perform these exams.
- Abstain from sex before marriage to prevent catching sexually transmitted diseases. Have tests every year to check for abnormal cells on the cervix. These cells can warn your doctor of potential reproductive health problems.
- Maintain good hygiene during menstrual periods. Bathe every day, and change sanitary pads or tampons every 4 to 6 hours.
| Days 1 to 5: | The lining of the _______ is shed. Blood and tissue leave the body through the _______. |
| Days 1 to 13: | An ovum _______ in the ovary. |
| Day _____: | Ovulation – an ovum is released from the _______. |
| Days 15 to 28: | The ovum travels down the _______ to the _______. If the ovum is not fertilized, the cycle will begin again at day one, and _______ will take place. If the _______ is fertilized, then a _______ will occur. |
The Female Reproductive System:
1. Define uterus.

The Female Body:
2. Define ovum.

3. The ova, or eggs, are stored in the organs called ________________________.

4. The ovaries also make most of the ________________________.

5. An ovum travels from an ________________________.

6. The lower part of the uterus ________________________.

7. The ________________________ connects the outside of the body with the uterus.

Ovulation:
8. Women are born with ________________________.

9. Beginning at puberty, ________________________.

10. When the ovum is released, ________________________.

Menstruation:
11. Define endometrium.

12. ________________________, the fertilized ovum will attach to the wall of the uterus and a pregnancy will begin.


14. This bleeding is also called ________________________.
15. _________________________________ a cycle that lasts about 28 days. The cycle is called the _________________________________.

16. List five things that can affect the menstrual cycle.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

17. Girls usually have their first menstrual period between the ages of _____________.

18. Describe the stages of the menstrual cycle.
   a. Days 1 to 5:
   b. Days 1 to 13:
   c. Day 14:
   d. Days 15 to 28:

Caring for the Female Body:
19. List four ways women and girls can protect themselves from reproductive health problems.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d.
Reproductive System – Female Anatomy Diagram (Front View)

First read the definitions below. Then label the female anatomy diagram by placing the correct number next to the appropriate definitions.

1. **Cervix** - The part of the uterus that protrudes into the cavity of the vagina.
2. **Endometrium (Blood and Tissue)** - The inner lining of the uterus, which is partially shed during menstruation.
3. **Fallopian Tube (Oviduct)** - One of a pair of ducts opening at one end into the uterus and at the other end into the peritoneal cavity, over the ovary. Each tube serves as a passage through which an ovum is carried to the uterus from the ovary.
4. **Ovary** - One of the paired organs that store and release egg cells and produce estrogen.
5. **Uterus** - A pear-shaped hollow organ with muscular walls where a fertilized egg becomes embedded and the fetus develops.
6. **Vagina** - A hollow, muscular, tunnel-like structure that forms the passageway between the cervix and vulva.