

PREGNANCY AND LABOUR

FOR EDUCATORS

REVISED SPRING 2026



Women's
Health Clinic

Land Acknowledgement

WHC has sites in Winnipeg on Anishinaabe Land which is also the heart of the Metis Nation. We recognize and honour that this work has been done for generations on this Land by the Women and Two-Spirit People, the Aunties and Kookums of many Indigenous Nations who meet and gather in what is now Treaty One Territory. We work towards creating a more just, equitable world by sharing health information with participants using an anti-oppressive approach.

Note aux éducateurs

Refer to the [Using an Anti-Oppressive Approach to Teaching Health](#) and the [Teen Talk Service Provider Manual](#) for tips on how to teach comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in an inclusive, trauma informed, sex positive way. More than just the appropriate language, a nonjudgmental tone, body language and facial expressions are key.

Pregnancy and Labour

Outline

- Check-in
- Ways to get pregnant
- Pregnancy options
- Activity : Common vs. Concerning
- Support
- Activity : Fetus in utero
- Labour and delivery
- Key messages and feedback forms

Buts de la séance

- Understand the different stages of labour
- Support informed decisions and body sovereignty
- Know the roles of support people and healthcare professionals
- Prepare for the diversity of experiences related to pregnancy

1. Check-in

There are several ways to become pregnant. Can anyone name a few?

- **Conception through penetration:** Having vaginal intercourse. Sperm enters the vagina and will meet the egg to begin a pregnancy.
- **Insemination:** Sperm is deposited in the vagina or uterus, with or without the help of a doctor.
- **Assisted reproductive technology:** Medical procedures that help people with fertility issues to conceive. This can be manipulating eggs, sperm, or embryos outside the body; one is in vitro fertilization (IVF). During IVF, eggs are taken from the ovaries, fertilized outside of the body, and put into the uterus. There are other methods of ART as well.
- **Sperm or egg donation:** Used when an individual or couple cannot conceive on their own, or for single individuals or same-sex couples.
- **Surrogacy:** A way of having a child for people who cannot carry their own baby. This happens when someone with a uterus agrees to carry a baby for someone else and then gives it to the biological parents after birth. The embryo is implanted in the surrogate's uterus.

Note sur la grossesse et les options

Once a person is pregnant, there are only three options: parenting, abortion, and adoption.

Body sovereignty means that every pregnant person has the right to make decisions about their own body; whether to continue the pregnancy, choose adoption, or have an abortion, with no one option being more valid than another, in respect of autonomy, consent, and dignity.

- **WHC:** Medication abortions are available for those up to 10 weeks pregnant. Aspiration abortions are available for those up to 16 weeks pregnant.
- **HSC:** Available for up to 19 weeks and 6 days pregnant.

Both sites offer counseling and pregnancy options services. Late-term abortions are rare and usually occur due to severe medical issues.

2. Activity: Common vs. Concerning symptoms

I will now divide you into groups. Discuss among yourselves and categorize the symptoms into two categories: common or concerning. Consider these symptoms as ones that only appear due to pregnancy, not symptoms that a person usually had before pregnancy.

Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Heavy bleeding
- Bloating and constipation
- Dizziness
- Tender breasts
- Fever/chills
- Mood swings
- Heartburn
- Sharp and unilateral pain in the abdomen, pelvis, or shoulders
- Weight gain
- Cravings or sensitivity to certain smells
- Palpitations
- Skin color changes
- Headache
- Implantation bleeding
- Cramps
- Nausea
- Hot flashes
- Severe headaches
- Severe swelling
- Fainting

Answers:

Concerning Symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding
- Sharp and unilateral pain in the abdomen, pelvis, or shoulders (possible ectopic pregnancy)
- Fainting
- Severe headaches
- Fever/chills
- Severe swelling (preeclampsia, high blood pressure can cause damage to the body)

Common Symptoms:

- Implantation bleeding
- Cramps
- Hot flashes
- Palpitations
- Mood swings
- Bloating and constipation
- Heartburn
- Dizziness
- Weight gain
- Headache
- Tender breasts
- Nausea
- Cravings or sensitivity to certain smells
- Fatigue
- Skin color changes

3. Support

During pregnancy, several forms of support can surround the expectant parent: midwives, doulas, doctors, community programs, online support groups, as well as the support of friends, family, or a therapist.

Medical care can be provided by your family doctor, an obstetrician, or a midwife (depending on individual needs).

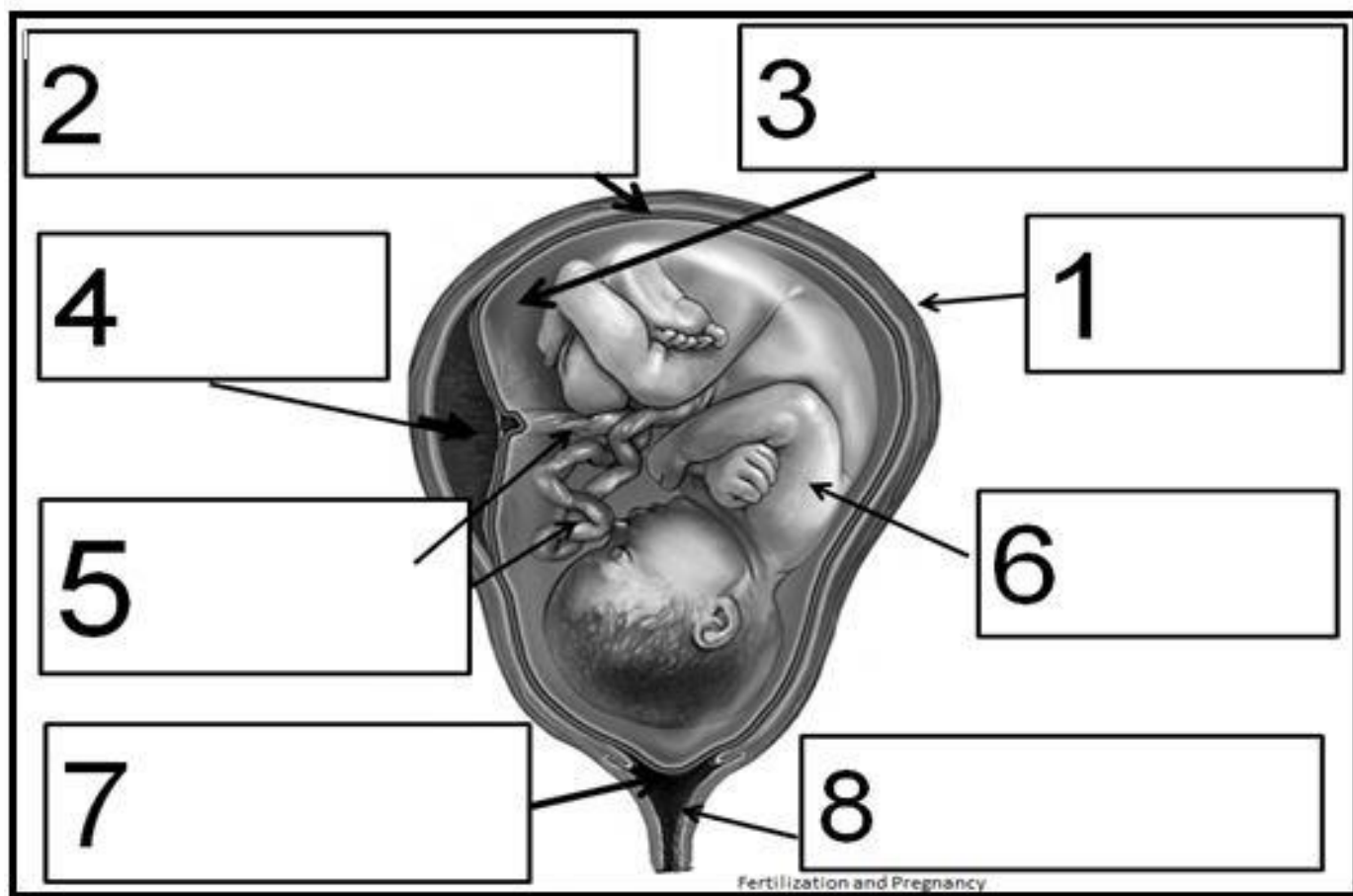
An obstetrician is a doctor specialized in pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care; this person conducts prenatal exams, prescribes and performs tests, handles complications, performs cesarean sections, and attends births in the hospital. Obstetricians are covered by Manitoba's health insurance plan, and you can access their services with or without a referral.

Midwives are regulated healthcare professionals who provide comprehensive care during pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and up to about six weeks after birth. They can attend births in hospitals, birth centers, or at home, prescribe and perform tests without needing a referral, and their services are also covered by Manitoba's insurance plan. No referral is required.

4. Anatomy: *fetus in utero*

I will now distribute to all of you a document illustrating a fetus in utero. The embryo becomes a fetus at 9 weeks, but this does not mean the fetus is fully formed. The term 'viability' often refers to the stage at which the fetus could potentially survive outside the uterus, usually around 24 weeks. This image represents a fetus about to be born, typically around 39 weeks. Do your best to match the terms with their respective numbers.

Amniotic sac	Amniotic fluid
Placenta	Uterus
Umbilical cord	Fetus
Cervix	Vagina



Answers:

Note to educator: have students try to guess the function of each answer.

1. **Uterus:** Where the fetus develops. The uterus also provides nutrients during pregnancy.
2. **Amniotic sac:** A fluid-filled sac that surrounds and protects the fetus, cushioning it from external pressures.
3. **Amniotic fluid:** The liquid in the amniotic sac that helps maintain a stable temperature, allows for fetal movement, and protects fetus.
4. **Placenta:** Transfers nutrients and oxygen from the parent to the fetus and removes waste products from the fetus's blood.
5. **Umbilical cord:** Connects the fetus to the placenta, carrying nutrients, oxygen, and waste products between them.
6. **Fetus:** The developing fetus from the 9th week of pregnancy until birth.
7. **Cervix:** The lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina, it dilates during labor to allow the baby to pass through.
8. **Vagina:** The canal that connects the uterus to the outside of the body.

5. Labour and Delivery

It is recommended to go to the hospital or birth center if contractions are strong and regular (every 3 to 5 minutes for an hour or more), if your waters break, if you are bleeding heavily with bright red blood, or if you feel that the baby is moving less. Otherwise, stay at home in the early stages of labor until contractions last longer (45 to 60 seconds) and come more frequently (every 3 to 5 minutes). If in doubt, call your doctor or midwife.

Video on stages of labour

LOOKING FOR VIDEO IN ENGLISH WITH INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE – APPROX 3 MINUTES LONG

[Les différentes phases de l'accouchement - Les Maternelles XXL - YouTube](#)

Strategies to cope with labour

- Breathing and relaxation
- Movement and position changes
- Water, music, visualization
- Support people
- Medical options if desired

- Soothing touch, massages
- Hot and cold therapy (cannot be used with an epidural)

Medical Options :

- **Epidural:** Regional anesthesia in the lower back for pain relief, as it blocks the pain signals sent to the brain.
- **Narcotics:** Injected or administered intravenously, these drugs can reduce pain, but may cause drowsiness or nausea.
- **Nitrous oxide:** Inhaled gas that offers partial pain relief and a feeling of calm.
- **Pudendal block:** Local anesthetic injected to numb the perineal area, often used during assisted deliveries. It does not relieve the pain from contractions.

6. Key Messages and Feedback Forms

Pregnancy is not a decision that suits everyone. There are several options: parenting, adoption, and abortion. Each of these options is legal, but access can be difficult due to various reasons. At **WHC**, we offer counseling services for pregnancy to help individuals learn about all available and accessible options so they can make an informed and autonomous choice.