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Female Reproductive Systems FAQ

Female reproductive system is concerned with copulation, fertilization, growth and development of the fetus and its birth. The organs of female reproductive system are divided into

A. External genitalia (vulva, pudendum): External genitalia include mons veneris, labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, vestibule and perineum. These organs are visible externally and are concerned with copulation and parturition.

B. Internal genitalia: These include vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes and the ovaries. These organs are placed internally and require special instruments for inspection.

Vagina: The vagina is a fibromusculo- membranous sheath communicating the uterine cavity with the exterior at the vulva. It constitutes the excretory channel for the uterine secretions and menstrual blood. It is the organ of copulation and forms the birth canal of parturition. It is highly sensitive and has got enough power of distensibility as evident during childbirth. The diameter of vagina is about 2.5 cm, being widest at its upper part and narrowest at its introitus. Length of vagina is 7 to 10 cm. Cervix, the mouth of uterus lies at the apex of vagina.

Uterus: This is the organ where pregnancy normally grows. During pregnancy, the uterus serves for reception, implantation, retention, nutrition of fetus, which it then expels during labor.

Uterus is pyriform in shape, measures about 8cm long, 5cm wide and 3cm thick. It weighs 50 to 80 grams. Uterus has triangular cavity which is lined by a lining of cells called endometrium. This endometrium normally sheds during each menses leading to periods.

Cervix: this is also called mouth of the uterus, is cylindrical in shape and measures about 2.5 cm. at its lower end it opens in the upper part of vagina. Cervix secretes important secretions and cervical mucus which has important part in passage of sperms in uterine cavity.

Fallopian tube (uterine tube, oviduct): These are paired structures, measuring about 10 cm. Each tube has got two openings, one communicating with the lateral angle of the cavity called uterine opening, measures 1 mm in diameter and the other opening on the lateral end called abdominal opening measuring about 2 mm in diameter. The lateral end of tube is called fimbrial end, as it has fingerlike projections called fimbrias that help in pick up of the oocyte after its release from the ovary after ovulation.

The important functions of tubes are transport of the gametes, to facilitate fertilization and survival of zygote through its secretions. Normally fertilization occurs in the middle part of tube (ampullary part), further development of zygote takes place upto morula and blastula stage of embryo. Gradually the embryo is transported by the ciliary actions of the lining cells towards the uterine cavity, where it gets finally implanted after three days of fertilization.

The ovary: The ovaries are paired sex gonads in female which are concerned for germ cell maturation, storage and its release during ovulation and female hormonal production.

It is oval in shape, measures about 3 cm in length, 2 cm in breadth and 1 cm in thickness and weighs about 15 to 20 grams. The ovaries contain about 6 to 7 millions oocytes during the intrauterine period, at birth this reduces to 2 millions, rest become atretic. At puberty about 4 lacs of oocytes are left behind; out of these only 400 to 500 oocytes ovulate during the entire reproductive period of female.