

Glossary

ACE inhibitor(s): angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor. A drug that is used to lower blood pressure.

acidic: produces acid, a sour substance.

acupuncture: the technique of inserting thin needles through the skin at specific points on the body to control pain and other symptoms. It is a type of complementary and alternative medicine.

addiction: uncontrollable craving, seeking, and use of a substance such as a drug or alcohol.

Addison's disease: an endocrine or hormonal disorder that occurs when the adrenal glands do not produce enough of the hormone cortisol and, in some cases, the hormone aldosterone. The disease is characterized by weight loss, muscle weakness, fatigue, low blood pressure, and sometimes darkening of the skin.

advance directive(s): a legal document that states the treatment or care a person wishes to receive or not receive if he or she becomes unable to make medical decisions; for example, as a result of being unconscious. Some types of advance directives are living wills and do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders.

AIDS: see HIV/AIDS.

Alzheimer's disease: a brain disease that cripples the brain's nerve cells over time and destroys memory and learning. It usually starts in late middle age

or old age and gets worse over time. Symptoms include loss of memory, confusion, problems in thinking, and changes in language, behavior, and personality.

amniotic fluid: clear, slightly yellowish liquid that surrounds the unborn baby or fetus during pregnancy.

anemia: when the amount of red blood cells, or hemoglobin, which is the substance in the blood that carries oxygen to organs, is below normal. Anemia can cause severe fatigue.

anesthesia: drugs or substances that cause loss of feeling or awareness. Local anesthetics cause loss of feeling in a part of a person's body. General anesthetics put a person to sleep.

angiotensin converting enzymes: substances in the body that cause the blood vessels to narrow and blood pressure to increase. Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors are drugs that help relax blood vessels, which decreases blood pressure.

angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs): drugs that decrease blood pressure by blocking the effects of angiotensin II, a hormone that causes blood vessels to narrow.

antibodies: blood proteins made by certain white blood cells called B cells in response to germs or other foreign substances that enter the body. Antibodies help the body fight illness and disease by attaching to germs and marking them for destruction.

antibody rheumatoid factor (RF or rheumatoid factor): a marker in the blood that shows a person has rheumatoid arthritis, a type of arthritis in which a person's own body triggers inflammation or other responses in the joints, nerves, lungs, or skin.

antidepressant(s): drug(s) used to treat depression.

antigens: germs or other foreign substances that enter the body and cause the immune system to make a specific immune response, such as fever or inflammation.

antimicrobial drugs: drugs that kill microorganisms, such as bacteria or mold, or stop them from growing and causing disease.

antiphospholipid antibody syndrome: an autoimmune disorder in which the body's own immune system mistakenly produces antibodies that attack normal components of the blood, causing clots.

antiretroviral drugs: drugs that inhibit the ability of HIV or other types of retroviruses to multiply in the body.

anxiety disorder: a serious medical illness that fills people's lives with anxiety and fear. Some anxiety disorders include panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, social phobia or social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder.

artery: a blood vessel that carries oxygen and blood from the heart to tissues and organs in the body.

arthritis: swelling, redness, warmth, and pain of the joints, the places where two bones meet, such as the elbow or knee. There are more than 100 types of arthritis.

artificial insemination: a process of introducing semen into the female reproductive tract by ways other than sexual intercourse. A woman or a couple experiencing infertility may go to a doctor for artificial insemination to increase the likelihood of pregnancy.

assisted reproductive technology (ART): a term used to describe several methods used to help infertile couples conceive. ART involves removing eggs from a woman's body, mixing them with sperm in the laboratory, and putting the embryos back into a woman's body. In vitro fertilization is one type.

asthma: a chronic disease of the lungs. Symptoms include cough, wheezing, a tight feeling in the chest and trouble breathing.

atopic dermatitis: dry and itchy skin, caused by certain diseases, irritating substances, allergies, or a person's genetic makeup.

attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a condition that starts in childhood that causes problems with hyperactivity, impulsivity, controlling behavior, and/or paying attention.

autoantibodies: blood proteins produced by the body's immune system that are meant to neutralize and destroy germs or other foreign substances, but instead attack healthy cells of the body.

autoimmune disease or disorder: a condition in which the body's immune system recognizes its own healthy tissues as foreign and directs an immune response or attack against them.

bacteria: microorganisms that exist all around us. Most bacteria are not harmful, and some protect us from harmful agents. Some bacteria can cause illness.

behavioral therapy: also called cognitive-behavioral therapy, a type of psychotherapy that helps people change the way they behave and react to certain situations.

benzene: a chemical that is used widely by the chemical industry and is also found in tobacco smoke, vehicle emissions, and gasoline fumes. Exposure to benzene may increase the risk of developing leukemia.

beta blockers: a type of medication that reduces nerve impulses to the heart and blood vessels, which makes the heart beat slower and with less force.

bile acid resins: drugs that help lower cholesterol levels in the blood by binding in the intestines with cholesterol-containing bile acids, which are then eliminated in the stool.

biopsy: the removal of body tissues for examination under a microscope or for other tests on the tissue.

bipolar disorder: a brain disorder that causes unusual, severe shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function. It causes dramatic mood swings—from overly “high” and/or irritable to sad and hopeless, and then

back again, often with periods of normal mood in between.

birth control pill: see oral contraceptive.

birth defect: a problem that happens while a baby is developing in the mother's body. Most birth defects happen during the first 3 months of pregnancy and may affect how the baby's body looks, works, or both. They can range from mild to severe.

bladder: the organ in the human body that stores urine. It is found in the lower part of the abdomen.

blood clot: a mass of blood that forms when blood platelets, proteins, and cells stick together. When a blood clot is attached to the wall of a blood vessel, it is called a thrombus. When it moves through the bloodstream and blocks the flow of blood in another part of the body, it is called an embolus.

blood glucose level: also called blood sugar level, it is the amount of glucose, or sugar, in the blood. Too much glucose in the blood for a long time can cause diabetes and damage many parts of the body, such as the heart, blood vessels, eyes, and kidneys.

blood pressure: the force of circulating blood on the walls of the arteries. Blood pressure is taken using two measurements: systolic (measured when the heart beats, when blood pressure is at its highest) and diastolic (measured between heartbeats, when blood pressure is at its lowest). Blood pressure is written with the systolic blood pressure first, followed

by the diastolic blood pressure, such as 120/80.

blood sugar level: see blood glucose level.

blood vessel: a tube through which the blood circulates in the body. Blood vessels include a network of arteries, arterioles, capillaries, venules, and veins.

bone density test: a test to measure the bone density, or thickness of bone. This test is used to diagnose and monitor osteoporosis, a disease in which bones become thin and can easily break.

bone marrow disease or disorder: a problem with the bone marrow, or the soft, sponge-like tissue in the center of some bones that contains immature cells called stem cells. The stem cells can develop into the red blood cells that carry oxygen through your body, the white blood cells that fight infections, and the platelets that help with blood clotting.

bone marrow transplant: a method that takes bone marrow from a suitable donor and transfers it into another person to replace bone marrow that is diseased or that has been destroyed. Bone marrow is a soft tissue containing young blood cells and platelets, the source of various blood cells, found in the hollow center of bones.

calcium channel blockers: drugs that decrease the heart's pumping strength and relax blood vessels, decreasing blood pressure.

cancer: a term for diseases in which abnormal cells in the body divide without control. Cancer cells can invade nearby tissues and can spread to other parts of the body through the blood and lymphatic system, which is a network of tissues that clears infections and keeps body fluids in balance.

carbon monoxide: a poisonous gas that has no color or odor. It is given off by burning fuel, such as from exhaust from cars or household heaters and tobacco products. Carbon monoxide prevents red blood cells in the body from carrying enough oxygen for cells and tissues to live.

carcinogen: any substance that causes cancer.

cardiovascular disease (CVD): a class of diseases that affect the heart, or blood vessels, or both.

celiac disease: a digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. When people with celiac disease eat foods containing gluten, their immune system responds by damaging the small intestine.

cervix: the lower, narrow part of the uterus or womb. The cervix forms a canal that opens into the vagina, which leads to the outside of the body.

cesarean section or C-section: a surgery by which a baby is delivered through an abdominal incision in the mother.

chemotherapy: treatment with anticancer drugs.

chicken pox: a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus, which results in a blister-like rash, itching, tiredness, and fever.

cholesterol: a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver and found in the blood and in all cells of the body. It is important for good health and is needed for making cell walls, tissues, hormones, vitamin D, and bile acid. Cholesterol also comes from eating foods taken from animals, such as egg yolks, meat, and whole-milk dairy products. Too much cholesterol in the blood may build up in blood vessel walls, block blood flow to tissues and organs, and increase the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. In the blood, cholesterol is bound to chemicals called lipoproteins.

cholesterol absorption inhibitors: medicines that help lower blood cholesterol by reducing the amount of cholesterol absorbed by the intestines.

chronic disease or illness: a disease or condition that persists or progresses over a long period of time.

chronic kidney failure: a condition in which the kidneys slowly lose their ability to function properly, and excess fluids and waste accumulate in the blood. Chronic kidney failure worsens slowly and can be caused by health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

chronic liver disease: a class of diseases, such as hepatitis C, liver cancer, and cirrhosis, that slowly destroy liver tissue over time.

chronic pain syndrome: a syndrome that affects a person's ability to function normally every day from a complex relation between body and mind influencing the level of pain felt by someone with chronic pain. The frustrating nature of the pain may cause emotional stress, psychological issues such as anxiety or depression, and addiction to pain-relieving medications.

chronic pancreatitis: a persistent inflammation of the pancreas, the organ that makes enzymes used for digestion and insulin, which regulates the use of blood glucose throughout the body. With this condition, digestive enzymes attack and destroy the pancreas and nearby tissues, causing scarring and pain.

cirrhosis: a type of chronic, progressive liver disease in which liver cells are replaced by scar tissue.

citrate: a substance in the urine that helps prevent the formation of calcium crystals. A patient with low urine citrate levels is at a higher risk of developing kidney stones.

citrulline antibodies test (CCP test): a test that detects the presence of citrulline antibodies in the blood, which are usually present in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. The CCP test has been shown to detect rheumatoid arthritis earlier than the rheumatoid factor test.

cleft lip or palate: abnormalities present at birth that affect the upper lip and the hard and soft palates of the mouth. Features range from a small notch in the lip to a complete fissure,

or groove, extending into the roof of the mouth and nose. These features may occur separately or together.

clitoris: an external female sex organ located near the top of the inner labia of the vagina. The clitoris is very sensitive to the touch, and for most women it is a center of sexual pleasure.

colorectal cancer screening: tests to check for cancer, precancerous growths, or other abnormal conditions of the colon and rectum.

computed tomography (CT) scan: also called CAT scan. A series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body taken from different angles; the pictures are created by a computer linked to an x-ray machine.

connective tissue: supporting tissue that surrounds other tissues and organs. Specialized connective tissue includes bone, cartilage, blood, and fat.

contractions: when a woman's uterus, or womb, tightens, or contracts, during the birthing process.

conventional medicine: a system in which medical doctors and other health care professionals (such as nurses, pharmacists, and therapists) treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation therapy, or surgery. Also called Western medicine, mainstream medicine, orthodox medicine, biomedicine, and allopathic medicine.

coronary angiography: a test that uses dye and special x-rays to show the inside of the coronary arteries, which supply blood and oxygen to the heart.

coronary artery disease (CAD): the most common type of heart disease that results from atherosclerosis—the gradual buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that bring blood to the muscles of the heart.

creatinine: a substance that is made by the body, found in the muscles, and used to store energy.

Cushing's syndrome: a hormonal disorder caused by prolonged exposure of the body's tissues to high levels of the hormone cortisol.

cyst: a sac or capsule in the body. It may be filled with fluid or other material.

cystic fibrosis (CF): one of the most common serious genetic, or inherited, diseases. CF causes the body to make abnormal secretions. This leads to mucus buildup, which impairs organs such as the pancreas, the intestine, and the lungs.

cytomegalovirus (CMV): a virus that may be carried in an inactive state for life by healthy persons. But it can cause severe pneumonia in people with suppressed immune systems and lifelong disabilities in babies.

dehydration: an excessive loss of body water that is necessary to carry on normal functions at an optimal level. Signs include increasing thirst, dry mouth, weakness or light-headedness (particularly if worse on standing), and a darkening of the urine or a decrease in urination.

depression: also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it is a

serious medical illness that involves the brain in which feelings of sadness and the “blues” do not go away. Symptoms include sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, change in weight, problems sleeping or oversleeping, energy loss, feelings of worthlessness, and thoughts of death or suicide. There are effective treatments—most people do best with both talk therapy and medicines.

dermatitis: see atopic dermatitis.

diabetes: a disease in which blood glucose or blood sugar levels are above normal. Type 2 diabetes, once known as adult-onset or noninsulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), is the most common form of diabetes. This form of diabetes usually begins with insulin resistance, a condition in which fat, muscle, and liver cells do not use insulin, a hormone that allows glucose to enter body cells for energy, properly. At first, the pancreas keeps up with the added demand by producing more insulin. In time, though, it loses the ability to secrete enough insulin in response to meals. Being overweight and inactive increases the chances of developing type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes, once called juvenile or insulin-dependent diabetes, is a lifelong disease that occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin to properly control blood glucose levels.

diaphragm: a birth control device consisting of a thin flexible disk, usually made of rubber, that is designed to

cover the cervix to prevent the entry of sperm during sexual intercourse.

dietitian or registered dietitian: a food and nutrition expert who can help a person choose healthy foods and plan menus.

disability: a physical or mental impairment that interferes with or prevents “normal” achievement in a particular function.

discrimination: treating a person or group of people unfairly because of prejudice or a bias toward a certain racial group, ethnic group, or sex.

diuretic: a type of medication sometimes called a “water pill” because it works in the kidney and flushes excess water and sodium from the body.

DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid. The molecules inside the body’s cells that carry genetic information and pass it from one generation to the next.

DNA test: a lab test on a small blood sample of a person to diagnose a genetic disorder, to find out if a person or his or her relatives are carriers of the mutated gene for a genetic disorder, or to find out if an unborn baby has inherited a genetic disorder.

douches: see douching.

douching: using water or a medicated solution to clean the vagina and cervix.

Down syndrome: the most frequent genetic cause for mild to moderate mental retardation and related medical problems. It is caused by a chromosomal abnormality. For an un-

known reason, a change in cell growth results in 47 instead of the usual 46 chromosomes. This extra chromosome changes the orderly development of the body and brain.

eating disorder: a disorder that involves serious problems with normal eating behaviors, such as feelings of distress and concern about body shape or weight, severe overeating, or starving oneself. Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder are types of eating disorders.

ectopic pregnancy: a pregnancy that does not occur in the uterus. It happens when a fertilized egg settles and grows in a place other than the inner lining of the uterus. Most ectopic pregnancies happen in the fallopian tube, but can happen in the ovary, cervix, or abdominal cavity.

eczema: a group of conditions in which the skin becomes inflamed, forms blisters, and becomes crusty, thick, and scaly. Eczema causes burning and itching and may occur over a long period of time. Atopic dermatitis is the most common type of eczema.

emergency contraception: emergency birth control, used to help keep a woman from getting pregnant after she has had sex without using birth control.

endometrial cancer: cancer that develops from the endometrium, or the inner lining of the uterus or womb.

endometriosis: a condition in which tissue that normally lines the uterus

grows in other areas of the body, usually inside the abdominal cavity, but acts as if it were inside the uterus.

Blood shed monthly from the misplaced tissue has no place to go, and tissues surrounding the area of endometriosis may become inflamed or swollen. This can produce scar tissue. Symptoms can include painful menstrual cramps that can be felt in the abdomen or lower back, pain during or after sexual activity, irregular bleeding, and infertility.

endometrium: the layer of tissue that lines the uterus.

epidural: a type of anesthesia in which a needle is inserted into the epidural space at the end of the spine to numb the lower body and reduce pain.

epilepsy: a physical disorder that involves recurrent seizures. It is caused by sudden changes in how the brain works.

esophagus: the muscular tube through which food passes from the throat to the stomach.

estrogen: a group of female hormones that are responsible for the development of breasts and other secondary sex characteristics in women. Estrogen is produced by the ovaries and other body tissues. Estrogen, along with the hormone progesterone, is important in preparing a woman's body for pregnancy.

exploitation: an act that victimizes someone, or the personal gain from the resources or labors of others for selfish reasons.

fibrates: cholesterol-lowering drugs that are primarily effective in lowering triglycerides and, to a lesser extent, in increasing HDL cholesterol levels.

fibroids: see uterine fibroids.

fibromyalgia (FM): a disorder that causes aches and pain all over the body, and involves “tender points” on specific places on the neck, shoulders, back, hips, arms, and legs that hurt when pressure is put on them.

folate: a B vitamin found naturally in some foods. It is used in the body to make new cells. See folic acid.

folic acid: a man-made form of folate found in supplements and added to fortified foods. It is a B vitamin used in the body to make new cells. If a woman has enough folic acid in her body before she is pregnant, it can help lower the risk of major birth defects of her baby’s brain and spine.

Fragile X syndrome: a genetic condition in which there is a change, or mutation, in a single gene called the Fragile X Mental Retardation 1 (*FMR1*) gene. This gene normally makes a protein the body needs for the brain to develop. But when there is a change in this gene, the body makes only a little bit or none of the protein, which can cause the symptoms of Fragile X. It is the most common cause of inherited mental retardation.

fungal infection: an overgrowth of fungus, a plant-like organism. Some examples of fungus that grow in the body are yeast and molds.

gallstone: solid material that forms in the gallbladder or common bile duct. Gallstones are made of cholesterol or other substances found in the gallbladder. They may occur as one large stone or as many small ones and vary from the size of a grain of sand to a golf ball.

gastroesophageal reflux (GER): also called acid reflux, a condition in which the contents of the stomach come back up into the esophagus or food pipe, causing discomfort.

gastrointestinal tract: the stomach and intestines. The gastrointestinal tract is part of the digestive system, which also includes the salivary glands, mouth, esophagus, liver, pancreas, gallbladder, and rectum.

gene: the functional and physical unit of heredity composed of DNA, which has a specific function and is passed from parent to offspring.

gene therapy: a new treatment for replacing defective or missing genes to restore normal function.

generalized anxiety disorder (GAD): a condition marked by excessive worry and feelings of fear, dread, and uneasiness that lasts 6 months or longer. Other symptoms include being restless, being tired or irritable, muscle tension, not being able to concentrate or sleep well, shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, sweating, and dizziness.

genetic counseling: a communication process between a specially trained health professional and a person concerned about the genetic risk of dis-

ease. The person's family and personal medical history may be discussed, and counseling may lead to genetic testing.

genetic testing: analyzing DNA to look for a genetic alteration or mutation that may show an increased risk of developing a specific disease or disorder.

genital mutilation: the partial or total cutting away of the external genitalia or other injury to the genitals, for cultural or other nontherapeutic reasons.

gestational diabetes: diabetes that occurs during pregnancy.

glucose challenge screening: a standard test for pregnant women in the early part of the third trimester that measures how effectively the body processes glucose, and helps diagnose gestational diabetes.

growth hormone: also called somatotropin. A protein made by the pituitary gland that helps control body growth and the use of glucose and fat in the body.

gum disease: an infection of the tissues that hold a person's teeth in place.

harassment: to disturb or bother someone continually. It can be of a sexual, physical, racial, or other nature.

HDL cholesterol: high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, also sometimes called the "good" cholesterol because it is the cholesterol in the blood that carries cholesterol from other parts of the body back to the liver, which leads to its removal from the body and prevents its buildup in the walls of the arteries.

heart attack: occurs when blood flow to a section of heart muscle becomes blocked. If the flow of blood is not restored quickly, the section of heart muscle becomes damaged from the lack of oxygen and begins to die.

heart disease: a number of abnormal conditions affecting the heart and the blood vessels in the heart. The most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease, which is the gradual buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that bring blood to the heart. This disease develops slowly and silently, over decades. It can go virtually unnoticed until it produces a heart attack.

heart failure: a condition in which the heart cannot pump all the blood it receives. This leads to buildup of fluids in the body tissues. It does not mean that the heart has stopped or is about to stop working. However, it is a serious condition that requires medical care.

hepatitis B: a serious disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) that attacks the liver. Infection is lifelong and can cause cirrhosis or scarring of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death.

herbicides: chemicals that kill plants.

hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer (HNPCC): an inherited disorder in which affected people have a higher-than-normal chance of developing colorectal cancer and certain other types of cancer, often before the age of 50.

herpes simplex virus (HSV): a virus that causes blisters and sores mainly around the mouth and genitals. There are two types. Type 1 is the most common and causes sores around the mouth, or cold sores. It is transmitted by infected saliva. Type 2 causes sores mainly on the genitals and is transmitted sexually.

high blood pressure: see hypertension.

HIV/AIDS: human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that infects and destroys the body's immune cells and causes a disease called AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. AIDS occurs in the most advanced stage of HIV infection, when a person's T-cell count goes below 200 and he or she becomes ill with one of the health problems common in people with AIDS. HIV/AIDS infection is lifelong—there is no cure, but there are many medicines to fight both HIV infection and the infections and cancers that come with it.

hives: red and sometimes itchy bumps on the skin, usually caused by an allergic reaction to a drug or a food.

hormone: a substance produced by one tissue and conveyed by the bloodstream to another tissue to affect a function of the body, such as growth or metabolism.

hormone therapy: the use of hormone drugs to treat a disease or condition. When used to treat the symptoms of menopause it is called menopausal hormone therapy.

hot flash: a sudden, temporary onset of body warmth, flushing, and sweating, often related to menopause.

HPV vaccine: a vaccine to help prevent infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV).

human papillomavirus (HPV): a member of a family of viruses that can cause abnormal tissue growth, such as genital warts, and other changes to cells. Infection with certain types of HPV increases the risk of developing cervical cancer.

human T-cell lymphotropic virus type 1 or type 2 (HTLV 1-2): viruses that infect T cells, a type of white blood cell, and can cause leukemia and lymphoma. HTLV 1-2 is spread by sharing syringes or needles, through blood transfusions or sexual contact, and from mother to child during birth or breastfeeding.

human trafficking: a form of modern-day slavery in which victims are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor.

hyperemesis gravidarum: extreme, persistent nausea and vomiting during pregnancy that may lead to dehydration.

hypertension: also called high blood pressure, it is having blood pressure greater than 140 over 90 mmHg (millimeters of mercury). Long-term high blood pressure can damage blood vessels and organs, including the heart, kidneys, eyes, and brain.

hysterectomy: surgery to remove the uterus and, sometimes, the cervix. When the uterus and part or all of the cervix are removed, it is called a total hysterectomy. When only the uterus is removed, it is called a partial hysterectomy.

immune system: a complex system in the body that recognizes and responds to foreign and potentially harmful substances, such as infections, to protect the body.

immunization: also called vaccination, a shot that contains germs that have been killed or weakened. When given to a healthy person, it triggers the immune system to respond and build immunity to a disease.

incontinence: the inability to control the flow of urine from the bladder, called urinary incontinence, or the escape of stool from the rectum, called fecal incontinence.

infertility: a condition in which a couple has problems conceiving, or getting pregnant, after 1 year of regular sexual intercourse without using any birth control methods. If a woman keeps having miscarriages, it's also called infertility. Infertility can be caused by a problem with the man or the woman, or both.

inflammatory bowel disease (IBD): long-lasting health problems that cause inflammation, swelling, and ulcers in the digestive tract. Symptoms can include cramping, abdominal pain, and severe bloody diarrhea. The two main types are ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

inherited genetic mutation: a change in the DNA sequence that parents pass on to their children.

insulin: a hormone that helps glucose, a type of sugar from the food a person eats, get into cells for energy. In people with diabetes, the body does not make enough insulin.

intestines: the long, tube-shaped organ in the abdomen that completes the process of digestion. The intestine has two parts, the small intestine and the large intestine, also called the colon or bowel.

intimate partner violence (IPV): abuse that occurs between two people in a close relationship, including current and former spouses and dating partners.

intrauterine device (IUD): a small device that is placed inside a woman's uterus by a health care provider, which prevents pregnancy by not allowing the sperm to fertilize the egg. There are two types of IUDs—a copper IUD and a hormonal IUD. IUDs do not protect a woman from HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections.

iodine: an element that is necessary for the body to make thyroid hormone. It is found in shellfish and iodized salt.

ionizing radiation: a type of radiation made or given off by x-rays, radioactive substances, rays that enter the Earth's atmosphere from outer space, and other sources. At high doses ionizing radiation increases chemical activity inside cells and can lead to health risks, including cancer.

irritable bowel syndrome (IBS): a disorder characterized most commonly by cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, and diarrhea. It causes a great deal of discomfort and distress, but it does not permanently harm the intestines and does not lead to a serious disease, such as cancer.

ischemic stroke: a blockage of blood vessels supplying blood to the brain, causing a decrease in blood supply. See stroke.

jaundice: a yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes, caused by too much bilirubin in the blood. Bilirubin is a yellowish fluid in bile, a fluid made by the liver. Although not a disease, jaundice can signal a liver or gallbladder problem. Newborns can develop jaundice, which is only temporary and goes away.

Kegel exercises: exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which support the body's uterus, bladder, and bowel. If a person's pelvic floor muscles are toned, he or she may reduce the risk of incontinence and similar problems.

labia: the lip-like structures that surround the vulva and protect the female genitals. The outer set of labia are called the labia majora and the inner set are the labia minora.

lactase: an enzyme that breaks down lactose, a type of sugar found in milk and milk products.

lactational amenorrhea method

(LAM): a method of birth control that is based on the natural infertility that happens after birth when a

woman is breastfeeding and is not having her period, or is amenorrheic. The baby suckling at the breast suppresses the hormones in the mother's body that make ovulation take place. This method is 98 percent effective if a woman is exclusively or almost exclusively breastfeeding (using very little or no infant formula for her baby), has not had a menstrual period since giving birth, and the baby is less than 6 months old. It is most effective if a mother breastfeeds often and on the baby's request, both day and night, without long intervals of time passing without a feeding; does not use pacifiers; and does not supplement with formula. This method is easy to use, begins right after birth, and has no side effects. It does not offer protection against STIs or HIV.

lactose intolerance: a digestive disorder in which the body cannot digest or absorb lactose, a type of sugar found in milk and other dairy products.

LDL cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, also known as the "bad" cholesterol because it is the type of cholesterol in the blood that is the main source of damaging buildup and blockage in the arteries. The higher a person's LDL cholesterol level, the greater the risk of developing heart disease.

legumes: a class of vegetables that are high in protein, including beans, peas, and lentils.

leukemia: cancer that starts in blood-forming tissue, such as the bone marrow, and causes large numbers of

blood cells to be produced and enter the bloodstream.

lipoproteins: substances in the blood that carry cholesterol to and from the liver.

low birth weight: having a weight at birth that is less than 2500 grams, or 5 pounds, 8 ounces.

lupus: also called systemic lupus erythematosus and SLE, it is a chronic, inflammatory, connective tissue disease that can affect the joints and many organs, including the skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, and nervous system. It can cause many different symptoms; however, not everyone with lupus has all the symptoms.

lymph node: a rounded mass of lymphatic tissue that is surrounded by a capsule of connective tissue. Lymph nodes filter lymph (lymphatic fluid), and they store white blood cells called lymphocytes.

major depressive disorder: see depression.

malaria: a mosquito-borne disease caused by a parasite. People with malaria often experience fever, chills, and flu-like illness. Left untreated, they may develop severe complications and die.

malnourished: lacking the proper nutrition or being unable to absorb nutrients from food.

mammogram: an x-ray of the breast.

measles: a highly contagious disease marked by fever, cough, and raised red spots on the skin. It is caused by

a virus that usually affects children and is spread by coughing or contact with fluid from the nose or mouth of someone who has been infected.

melanoma: a disease in which cancer cells form in the skin cells called melanocytes, or the cells that color the skin. It is the most serious type of skin cancer, and it can occur anywhere on the body. Possible signs of melanoma include a change in the appearance of a mole or pigmented area of skin.

menopausal hormone therapy (MHT): replaces the hormones that a woman's ovaries stop making at the time of menopause, easing symptoms like hot flashes and vaginal dryness. It involves using man-made estrogen alone or estrogen with a progestin, often in the form of a pill or skin patch. MHT used to be called hormone replacement therapy, or HRT. [A recent, large study found that use of MHT poses some serious risks, such as increasing some women's risk of breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, and pulmonary embolism (blood clot in the lung). Women who choose to use MHT should use the lowest dose that helps for the shortest time needed. Talk with your doctor to find out if MHT is right for you and discuss other ways to relieve menopausal symptoms.]

menopausal symptoms: symptoms that a woman can experience during menopause, which can include changes in menstruation, hot flashes, night sweats, problems sleeping, vaginal

dryness and infections, mood changes, decreased sex drive, and more.

menopause: the normal change in a woman's life when her period stops. Menopause is often referred to as "the change of life" or "the change." During menopause a woman's body slowly produces less of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. This often happens between the ages of 45 and 55. A woman has reached menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months in a row.

menstruation: the blood flow from the uterus that happens about every 4 weeks in a woman. From puberty until menopause, menstruation occurs about every 28 days when a woman is not pregnant.

metabolic syndrome: a group of conditions that put a patient at risk of heart disease and diabetes. These conditions include high blood pressure, high blood glucose levels, high levels of triglycerides, low levels of HDL cholesterol, and having too much body fat around the waist.

methadone: a morphine-like drug used to treat severe pain and to prevent withdrawal symptoms in patients who are addicted to heroin or to other opiates. It may also be used to treat severe coughing in patients with lung cancer.

miscarriage: also called a spontaneous abortion, it is an unplanned loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks.

miscarry: see miscarriage.

mole: a benign growth on the skin that is formed by a cluster of melanocytes, or cells that make the pigment melanin. Moles are usually dark in color and may be raised from the skin.

monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS): a benign condition in which there is a higher-than-normal level of a protein called M protein in the blood. Patients with this condition are at an increased risk of developing cancer.

mons pubis: the soft mound of flesh protecting the pubic bone.

MSG: monosodium glutamate. A flavor enhancer used in some foods. Its use has become controversial in the past 30 years because of reports of adverse reactions in people who have eaten foods that contain MSG.

mutated gene: a gene that has changed, because of mistakes in cell division or exposure to DNA-damaging agents in the environment. Mutations can be harmful, beneficial, or have no effect. If they occur in cells that make eggs or sperm, they can be inherited; if mutations occur in other types of cells, they are not inherited. Certain mutations may lead to cancer or other diseases.

narcotic: an agent or drug that causes insensibility or stupor and can relieve pain.

natural family planning: a birth control method that involves not having sexual intercourse at the time in a woman's menstrual cycle when she is most likely to become pregnant (usually around the time of ovulation).

nitrates: medications that relax blood vessels and relieve chest pain caused by coronary artery disease.

nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): pain relievers such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen. These medicines are safe and effective when taken as directed, but they can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in some people.

obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): an anxiety disorder in which a person has obsessive thoughts and compulsive actions, such as cleaning, checking, counting, or hoarding. The person becomes trapped in a pattern of repetitive thoughts and behaviors that are senseless and distressing but very hard to stop. OCD can be mild or severe, but if severe and left untreated can stop a person from being able to function at work, at school, or even in the home.

oral contraceptive: also called the birth control pill or “the pill,” it is a medication that contains the hormones estrogen and progesterin, or progesterin only, and is taken to prevent pregnancy. The pill is 95 to 99.9 percent effective at preventing pregnancy, but it does not protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Some birth control pills are used to treat acne or premenstrual dysphoric disorder, the physical and emotional symptoms that occur before the menstrual period each month.

organ failure: when an organ, such as the heart or other part of the body

that performs a specific function, stops functioning properly.

osteoarthritis: a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage, the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint. The top layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away. This allows bones under the cartilage to rub together, which causes pain, swelling, and loss of motion of the joint.

osteoporosis: a bone disease that is characterized by progressive loss of bone density and thinning of bone tissue, causing bones to break easily.

overactive thyroid: also called hyperthyroidism, it is a condition in which the thyroid gland makes and releases too much thyroid hormone in the body. Symptoms can include weight loss, chest pain, cramps, diarrhea, and nervousness.

ovulation: the release from a follicle of a single egg that developed in the ovary, which is then pushed down the fallopian tube and is ready to be fertilized. It usually occurs regularly, around day 14 of a 28-day menstrual cycle.

oxalate: a chemical found in many foods that can be irritating to people with pain conditions, such as vulvodynia, fibromyalgia, and irritable bowel syndrome. Foods high in oxalate may also cause kidney stones in someone prone to forming calcium oxalate stones.

pancreas: a glandular organ located in the abdomen. It makes pancreatic juices, which contain enzymes that aid in digestion, and it produces several hormones, including insulin. The

pancreas is surrounded by the stomach, intestines, and other organs.

panic attack: sudden feeling of terror for no reason that may also occur with physical symptoms such as fast heartbeat, chest pain, problems breathing, and dizziness.

panic disorder: an anxiety disorder in which a person has sudden attacks of fear and panic. The attacks may occur without a known reason, but many times they are triggered by events or thoughts that produce fear in the person, such as taking an elevator or driving. Symptoms of the attacks can include rapid heartbeat, chest sensations, shortness of breath, dizziness, tingling, and feeling anxious.

Pap test: a test that finds changes in the cells of the cervix. The test can find cancer or cells that can turn into cancer. To perform a Pap test, a health care provider uses a small brush to gently scrape cells from the cervix for examination under a microscope.

parasite: an organism that lives on or in a host organism and gets its food from or at the expense of its host.

parasitic infection: when a parasite invades the body and causes disease.

parvovirus B19: a virus that causes an illness called fifth disease, a mild rash illness that occurs most often in children. Fifth disease causes a “slapped-cheek” rash on the face and a lacy red rash on the trunk and limbs that may itch, but resolves within 7 to 10 days. An adult who has not been infected

with parvovirus B19 in the past can be infected and become ill.

pelvic inflammatory disease (PID): an infection of the female reproductive organs that are above the cervix, such as the fallopian tubes and ovaries. It is the most common and serious problem caused by sexually transmitted infections (STIs). PID can cause ectopic pregnancies, infertility, chronic pelvic pain, and other serious problems. Symptoms can include fever, foul-smelling vaginal discharge, extreme pain, and vaginal bleeding.

phenylketonuria (PKU): an inherited disorder in which the body cannot process a portion of the protein called phenylalanine (Phe), which is in almost all foods. If the Phe level gets too high, the brain can become damaged. All babies born in the United States are now tested for PKU soon after birth, making it easier to diagnose the disease and to treat it early.

phobia: an anxiety disorder in which a person has an unusual amount of fear of a certain activity or situation.

physical therapist: a health professional who teaches exercises and physical activities that help condition muscles and restore strength and movement.

physical therapy: therapy aimed to restore movement, balance, and coordination.

phytoestrogens: an estrogen-like substance found in some plants and plant products, such as herbs, grains, and fruits, which may have anticancer effects.

pill, “the pill”: see oral contraceptive.

placenta: a temporary organ that joins the mother and fetus during pregnancy. The placenta transfers oxygen and nutrients from the mother to the fetus and permits the release of carbon dioxide and waste products from the fetus. It is then expelled from the mother’s body during the birth process with the fetal membranes.

plaque: a buildup of fat, cholesterol, and other substances that accumulate in the walls of the arteries.

pneumonia: a severe inflammation of the lungs in which the alveoli, or tiny air sacs in the lungs, are filled with fluid. This may cause a decrease in the amount of oxygen that the blood can absorb from air breathed into the lung. Pneumonia is usually caused by infection but may also be caused by radiation treatment, allergy, or irritation of lung tissue by inhaled substances. It may involve part or all of the lungs.

polycystic kidney disease (PKD): a kidney disorder passed down through families in which multiple cysts form on the kidneys, causing them to become enlarged.

polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS): a health problem that can affect a woman’s menstrual cycle, ability to have children, hormones, heart, blood vessels, and appearance. With PCOS, women typically have high levels of androgens or male hormones, missed or irregular periods, and many small cysts in their ovaries.

postmenopausal: after menopause.

postpartum depression: a serious condition that requires treatment from a health care provider. With this condition, feelings of the “baby blues,” such as feeling sad, anxious, afraid, or confused after having a baby, do not go away and may worsen.

posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): a psychological condition that can happen when a person sees or experiences something traumatic, such as rape, murder, torture, or wartime combat. A person can have many symptoms, including flashbacks or reliving the event, nightmares, fatigue, anxiety, and forgetfulness and may withdraw from family and friends.

preeclampsia: also known as toxemia, it is a syndrome occurring in a pregnant woman after her 20th week of pregnancy that causes high blood pressure and problems with the kidneys and other organs. Symptoms include sudden increase in blood pressure, too much protein in the urine, swelling in a woman’s face and hands, headache, blurred vision, and abdominal pain.

premature birth: see preterm birth.

premenstrual syndrome (PMS): a group of symptoms linked to the menstrual cycle that occur in the week or 2 weeks before menstruation. The symptoms usually go away after menstruation begins and can include acne, breast swelling and tenderness, feeling tired, having trouble sleeping, upset stomach, bloating, constipation or diarrhea, headache or backache, appetite changes or food cravings, joint

or muscle pain, trouble concentrating or remembering, tension, irritability, mood swings or crying spells, and anxiety or depression.

preterm birth: also called premature birth, it is a birth that occurs before the 37th week of pregnancy.

primary biliary cirrhosis: a disease that slowly destroys the liver's bile ducts. Bile is a substance produced in the liver that helps digest fat in the small intestine and remove toxins from the body. When the ducts are damaged, bile builds up in the liver and damages liver tissue. Biliary cirrhosis can develop over time and may cause the liver to stop working. The cause is unknown.

progesterone: a female hormone produced by the ovaries. Progesterone, along with estrogen, prepares the uterus (womb) for a possible pregnancy each month and supports the fertilized egg if conception occurs. Progesterone also helps prepare the breasts for milk production and breastfeeding.

progestin: an artificial or man-made hormone that works by causing changes in the uterus. When taken with the hormone estrogen, progestin works to prevent thickening of the lining of the uterus. This is helpful for women who are in menopause and are taking estrogen for their menopausal symptoms. Progestins also are prescribed to regulate the menstrual cycle, treat unusual stopping of the menstrual periods, help a pregnancy occur or maintain a pregnancy, or

treat unusual or heavy bleeding of the uterus. They also can be used to prevent pregnancy; help treat cancer of the breast, kidney, or uterus; and help treat loss of appetite and severe weight or muscle loss.

protein deficiency: a condition in the body caused by not having enough protein in the diet, which can lead to malnutrition. Early symptoms of any type of malnutrition are general and include fatigue, irritability, and lethargy. As protein deficiency continues, growth failure, loss of muscle mass, generalized swelling, and decreased immunity can occur.

proteins: large molecules that contain primarily carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Proteins are essential to the structure and function of all living cells. Examples of proteins in the body include enzymes, antibodies, and some hormones.

psoriasis: a chronic or long-lasting skin disease that causes patches of thick, red, or inflamed skin covered with silvery scales. These patches usually itch or feel sore and most often occur on the elbows, knees, other parts of the legs, scalp, lower back, face, palms, and soles of the feet, but they can occur on skin anywhere on the body. Psoriasis mostly affects adults.

psychological therapy: also called psychotherapy, it is counseling or "talk" therapy with a qualified health care provider in which a person can explore difficult, and often painful, emotions and experiences, such as feelings of anxiety, depression, or trauma. It

is a process that aims to help the patient become better at making positive choices in his or her life and to become more self-sufficient. Psychotherapy can be given for an individual or in a group setting.

psychologist: a clinical psychologist is a professional who treats mental illness, emotional disturbance, and behavior problems. He or she uses talk therapy as treatment and cannot prescribe medication. A clinical psychologist will have a master's degree (MA) or doctorate (PhD) in psychology and possibly more training in a specific type of therapy.

qi energy: in traditional Chinese medicine, vital energy or life force.

racism: the belief that one race is better than another.

radiation treatment: also called radiation therapy, it is the use of high-energy radiation from x-rays, gamma rays, neutrons, protons, and other sources to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation may come from a machine outside the body, or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells. Systemic radiation therapy uses a radioactive substance that travels in the blood to tissues throughout the body.

regulatory T cells: immune cells that help orchestrate the elaborate immune system and assist other cells to make antibodies. Helper T cells are essential for activating the body's defenses against foreign substances. Another subset of regulatory T cells prevent immune responses to self.

Without them autoimmune disease would flourish.

renal disease: also called kidney disease, it is any disease or disorder that affects the function of the kidneys.

renal tubular acidosis: a disease that occurs when the kidneys fail to excrete acids into the urine, which causes a person's blood to remain too acidic.

reproductive tract: the system of organs in males or females that act together to perform reproduction.

restless leg syndrome (RLS): a neurologic disorder that causes unpleasant sensations in the legs and an uncontrollable urge to move them for relief. Persons affected with the disorder describe the sensations as burning, creeping, tugging, or feelings like insects crawling inside the legs.

saturated fat: fat such as butter, solid shortening, lard, and fatback. It is recommended that people avoid saturated fat in their diets.

seizures: uncontrollable contractions of muscles that can result in sudden movement or loss of control, also known as convulsions.

self-esteem: how you feel about yourself, such as how you feel about who you are, the way you act, and how you look. When a person does not think too highly of himself or herself, he or she is said to have low self-esteem.

semen: the fluid that contains sperm that a male releases from his penis when he becomes sexually aroused or has an orgasm.

sexual assault: any form of sexual activity that you do not agree to, including inappropriate touching and vaginal, anal, or oral penetration. It includes rape, attempted rape, and child molestation. Sexual assault can be verbal, visual, or anything that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention.

sexually transmitted infections (STIs): diseases that are spread by sexual activity. Also called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

sickle cell anemia: a serious, inherited condition in which the red blood cells can become sickle shaped, or “C” shaped, keeping them from moving easily through blood and to become stiff, sticky, form clumps, and get stuck in blood vessels, which can cause pain, infections, and organ damage.

sleep apnea: a disorder involving brief interruptions of breathing during sleep.

social anxiety disorder: an anxiety disorder in which a person feels overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. It can be limited to only one type of situation—such as a fear of speaking in formal or informal situations, or eating or drinking in front of others—or, in its most severe form, a person has symptoms almost anytime he or she is around other people.

spermicide: chemical jelly, foam, cream, or suppository inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse that kills sperm to prevent pregnancy.

spina bifida: the most common disabling birth defect in the United States. Its name means “cleft spine,” or failure of a fetal spine to close the right way when it is developing before birth. It occurs very early in pregnancy, roughly 3 to 4 weeks after conception, before most women know that they are pregnant.

spinal cord injury: includes any kind of physical trauma that crushes and compresses the vertebrae in the neck, which can cause injury at the cervical level of the spinal cord and below; injuries that penetrate the spinal cord; injuries that fracture or dislocate the vertebrae, which causes pieces of vertebrae to tear into cord tissue or press down on the nerve parts of the cord that carry signals between the brain and the rest of the body.

spleen: an organ above the stomach and under the ribs on the left side of the body. It is part of the lymphatic system, which fights infection and keeps body fluids in balance. It contains white blood cells that fight germs. It also helps control the amount of blood in the body and destroys old and damaged cells.

stalking: repeated harassing or threatening behavior by a person, such as following another person, appearing at that person’s home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing his or her property. Almost any unwanted contact between two people that directly or indirectly communicates a threat or places the victim in fear can be considered stalking.

statins: the most commonly prescribed drugs for people who need a cholesterol-lowering medicine. Statins lower LDL cholesterol levels more than other types of drugs. They also moderately lower triglycerides and raise HDL cholesterol.

STDs: see sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

stillbirth: when a fetus dies during birth, or when the fetus dies during the late stages of pregnancy when it would have been otherwise expected to survive.

stimulus (plural, stimuli): anything that can trigger a physical or behavioral change, such as irritants, sights, sounds, heat, cold, smells, or other sensations.

stroke: stoppage of blood flow to an area of the brain, causing permanent damage to nerve cells in that region. A stroke can occur either because an artery is clogged by a blood clot (called ischemic stroke) or an artery tears and bleeds into the brain. A stroke can cause symptoms such as loss of consciousness, problems with movement, and loss of speech.

sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS): the diagnosis given for the sudden death of an infant younger than 1 year that remains unexplained after a complete investigation. Because most cases of SIDS occur when a baby is sleeping in a crib, SIDS is also commonly known as crib death.

systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE): see lupus.

tai chi: sometimes called “moving meditation,” a mind-body practice that originated in China as a martial art. A person doing tai chi moves his or her body slowly and gently, while breathing deeply and meditating.

tension headache: the most common type of headache, caused by tight muscles in a person’s shoulders, neck, scalp, and jaw. It is often related to stress, depression, or anxiety. A person is more likely to get tension headaches if he or she works too much, does not get enough sleep, misses meals, or uses alcohol.

thymus: a gland that lies in the upper chest area beneath the breastbone and plays an important role in the development of the immune system in early life. Its cells form a part of the body’s normal immune system. The gland is somewhat large in infants, grows gradually until puberty, and then gets smaller and is replaced by fat with age.

thyroid: a small gland in the neck that makes and stores hormones that help regulate heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and the rate at which food is converted into energy.

thyroid disease: a disease of the thyroid gland that causes the body to use energy more slowly or quickly than it should. There are four main types of thyroid disease: hyperthyroidism—too much thyroid hormone, hypothyroidism—too little thyroid hormone, benign (noncancerous) thyroid disease, and thyroid cancer.

tongue-tied: when the frenulum, the cord of tissue underneath the tongue, is too tight and inhibits feeding and speech in infants.

toxic shock syndrome: a severe disease that involves fever, shock, and problems with the function of several body organs. It is caused by a toxin produced by certain types of staphylococcus bacteria.

toxins: substances created by plants and animals that are poisonous to humans. Most toxins that cause problems in humans are released by microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses.

trans fat: a type of unsaturated fat. Most *trans* fats are chemically produced by food manufacturers to prolong the shelf life of processed food. Some *trans* fats occur naturally in meat and dairy products from animals such as cattle, goats, and sheep. Eating *trans* fats increases the risk of certain long-term illnesses, such as coronary artery disease. *Trans* fats can be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated.

tremor: unintentional trembling or shaking movements in one or more parts of the body.

triglyceride: a type of fat in the bloodstream and fat tissue. Normal triglyceride levels are below 150. Levels above 200 are considered high. High triglyceride levels can contribute to the hardening and narrowing of the arteries. This puts a person at a higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Diseases such as diabetes, obesity, kidney failure, or alcoholism can cause high triglycerides.

tuberculosis (TB): a disease caused by bacteria that usually affects the lungs. TB bacteria are spread through the air from one person to another. If someone with TB of the lungs or throat coughs or sneezes, people nearby who breathe in the bacteria can get TB. If the body cannot stop the bacteria from growing, a person will develop TB disease.

type 1 diabetes: see diabetes.

type 2 diabetes: see diabetes.

ulcer: also called peptic ulcer. It is a sore on the lining of the stomach or beginning of the small intestine. Peptic ulcers are common—1 in 10 Americans develops an ulcer at some time in his or her life. One cause of peptic ulcers is bacterial infection. But some ulcers are caused by long-term use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). In a few cases, cancerous tumors in the stomach or pancreas can cause ulcers. Peptic ulcers are not caused by stress or eating spicy food.

ultrasound: also called sonography, it is a painless, harmless test that uses sound waves to produce images of the organs and structures of the body on a screen.

underactive thyroid: also called hypothyroidism, it is a condition in which the thyroid gland does not make enough thyroid hormone. Symptoms can include weight gain, constipation, dry skin, and sensitivity to the cold.

urinary tract infection (UTI): an infection anywhere in the urinary tract, or organs that collect and store urine

and release it from your body (the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra). An infection occurs when microorganisms, usually bacteria from the digestive tract, cling to the urethra (opening to the urinary tract) and begin to multiply.

uterine fibroids: common, benign, or noncancerous tumors that grow in the muscle of the uterus, or womb. Fibroids often cause no symptoms and need no treatment, and they usually shrink after menopause. But sometimes fibroids cause heavy bleeding or pain and require treatment.

uterus: a woman's womb, or the hollow, pear-shaped organ located in a woman's lower abdomen between the bladder and the rectum.

vaccines: see immunization.

vaginal fluid: fluid or liquid made by glands in a woman's vagina and cervix. The fluid flows out of the vagina and keeps it healthy and clean. The color and thickness of the discharge change with the menstrual cycle.

vaginal yeast infection: a common infection in women caused by an overgrowth of the fungus candida. It is normal to have some yeast in the vagina, but sometimes it can overgrow because of hormonal changes in the body, such as those that occur because of pregnancy, or from taking certain medications, such as antibiotics. Symptoms can include itching, burning, and irritation of the vagina; pain when urinating or with sexual intercourse; and vaginal discharge that looks like cottage cheese.

virus: a microorganism that can infect cells and cause disease.

vitiligo: a skin condition in which there is loss of pigment or color from areas of skin, resulting in irregular white patches that feel like normal skin.

voyeurism: the practice of watching private sexual acts.

womb: see uterus.

yeast infection: see vaginal yeast infection.

yoga: a mind-body exercise that combines stretching and controlled breathing to achieve relaxation and a stable mood. ■