

# Pregnancy and Birth

**Objective:** Participants will describe the process of pregnancy and birth.

**Structure:** Pairs activity.

**Time:** 25 minutes.

**Materials:** “Pregnancy and Birth” cards.

## Procedure

**Divide** participants into pairs. Give each pair a full set of “Pregnancy and Birth” cards in random order. Give participants 10 minutes to put the cards into sequential order. In the large group, discuss the sequence of the cards using the following answer key:

### **1. Decision to have a child**

The first step toward pregnancy should be making the decision to have a child. This decision is based upon weighing parenting skills, understanding the day-to-day responsibilities of caring for a child, assessing finances and support of family and friends, and the age of the parents. The expense of raising a child from birth to age 21 is considerable.

### **2. Male’s erect penis put into female’s vagina**

When a man and woman have vaginal intercourse, the man’s erect penis is put into the woman’s vagina. *(For more mature groups, you may want to add that if a woman does not have a male partner or if her male partner is infertile, she can undergo artificial insemination where sperm is manually placed in her vagina.)*

### **3. Ejaculation: sperm enter vagina**

During ejaculation, millions of sperm spurt out of the penis and enter the vagina.

### **4. Sperm swim up vagina**

The sperm swim up the vagina, using their tails to propel themselves forward. Some of the stronger sperm swim through the cervix to reach the uterus, or womb.

### **5. Some sperm meet ovum in fallopian tubes (if ovulation occurred)**

Some of these sperm move through the uterus into the fallopian tubes. For fertilization to occur, the sperm must meet the ovum in the fallopian tube. (If ovulation occurred, whereby the ovary releases one egg per month, and if the egg is not fertilized, a woman has a menstrual period. Ovulation occurs about 14 days prior to a woman's menstrual period which makes this a woman's most fertile time of month.) Once the sperm get up into the uterus and fallopian tubes, they can live for 3-5 days. Sperm usually reach the fallopian tubes within 1-1/2 hours of ejaculation.

### **6. Fertilization: one sperm enters ovum's outer membrane**

If an egg has been released by an ovary (approximately two weeks before a woman's menstrual period—a woman's most fertile time of month) and is present in the fallopian tube, only one sperm is allowed into the ovum's outer membrane. The process of the sperm entering the ovum is called "fertilization" or "conception."

### **7. Fertilized egg (zygote) travels to uterus**

The newly fertilized egg travels through the fallopian tube toward the uterus. The fertilized egg is now called a zygote.

### **8. Zygote implants on wall of uterus**

In the uterus, the zygote will develop into a baby during nine months of pregnancy.

### **9. Confirm pregnancy**

Tests of urine and blood samples can be done in laboratories to confirm pregnancy on the 15<sup>th</sup> day after fertilization.

### **10. Good prenatal care**

Diet during pregnancy is very important. If a woman's diet is healthful, she has a better chance of remaining healthy during pregnancy and bearing a healthy child. Women should not smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs during pregnancy, as these actions harm the developing baby. Excessive and chronic alcohol use increases the risk of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Most healthy women can continue regular physical activity during pregnancy. Vigorous and strenuous exercise should not start in pregnancy.

### **11. Nine months pass**

The baby is ready to be born after nine months. Birth happens in three stages: labour, delivery of the baby, and delivery of the placenta.

### **12. Contractions of uterus opens cervix**

Contractions of the uterus gradually increase in intensity and occur more frequently as labour progresses. The contractions of the uterus open the cervix wide enough for the baby to exit.

### **13. Baby enters birth canal**

When the cervix has completely opened, the baby enters the birth canal, which results in the delivery of the baby out of the mother's body.

### **14. Abdominal muscles propel baby through vagina**

As the uterus contracts, the woman pushes with her abdominal muscles to propel the baby through the vagina.

### **15. Umbilical cord cut**

After the baby is born, it is still attached to the mother by the umbilical cord. As soon as the baby begins breathing on its own or the cord no longer pulsates, the umbilical cord is clamped and cut.

### **16. Delivery of placenta**

The delivery of the placenta, or "afterbirth," usually occurs 30 minutes after the baby is born. The placenta grows on the inner wall of the uterus and nourishes the baby during pregnancy. It is the size of a large dinner plate. After the birth of the baby, it separates from the uterus, which then contracts to push it out.

**Conclude** by pointing out that humans experience three rapid growth periods of change in our bodies: conception to birth, birth to first year, and puberty.

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(Adapted with permission from: Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada (2001) *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual and Reproductive Health Education*. Ottawa: Author.)

## Pregnancy and Birth Cards

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Fertilized egg (zygote) travels to uterus
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Good prenatal care
Nine months pass
Contractions of uterus opens cervix
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