PREGNANCY AND CHILD BIRTH

Pregnancy is the result of the fertilization of the female ovum or egg by the male cell or sperm. To know how pregnancy occurs, we ought to first know the male and female reproductive organs.

Male Reproductive System

The *Male Reproductive System* is made up of two *testes* which are enclosed by the *scrotum*, sperm cells (spermatozoa) which is the male sex cell and are produced in the testes, the sperm ducts (vas deferens) which are tubes which carry sperms from the testes to the seminal vesicles, seminal vesicles which are where the sperms are stored until they are ejaculated, the prostate gland which secrets a liquid in which the sperm cells are suspended, and the urethra which is the duct through which sperms flow to the outside. It is embedded in the penis.

Female Reproductive System

The Female Reproductive System is made up of two ovaries which produces one egg every month, ovum or egg which is the female sex cell, two oviducts (or fallopian tubes) which leads from the ovaries to the uterus, the uterus (or womb) which is the place where the foetus (or baby) develops, and the vagina which is connected to the uterus and leads to the vulva.

How Pregnancy Occurs

Each of the ovary produces ovum every month. The process of producing an ovum by the ovary is called ovulation. If there is a sexual relationship or intercourse between a man and a woman at the period when the ovum is produced, the sperm will fertilize the ovum. The result is pregnancy. If there is no sexual relationship, the released ovum will die off in a day or two. Then menstruation will occur. Menstruation is the flow of blood which each normal woman of child-bearing age experiences every month unless she is pregnant.

Signs of Pregnancy

Some of the signs of pregnancy are: stoppage of menstruation, fuller and tender breasts, darker nipples, nausea and vomiting (esp. in the mornings), and there may be frequent urination. At about three months, the abdomen enlarges. As the pregnancy advances, the mother may feel the baby's movements.

Ante-natal Care

Ante-natal (or pre-natal) care is the care required by a pregnant woman before the birth of her child. Ante-natal care includes the following:

Regular visits to ante-natal clinic. At the clinic, the doctor or midwife examines the pregnant woman by caring out the following tests—urine test, blood test, blood pressure check, weight check, abdominal examination, and pelvic assessment towards the end of the pregnancy.

At the clinic, the woman also learns about child care and how to care for herself, like the kind of food she should be eating, kinds of clothing she should wear, etc.

Preparation for Child Birth

It is very important that a pregnant or expectant mother prepares for the delivery of her child sell in advance. She has to get and pack all the things she and her baby will need in the hospital. The midwife will tell her about these at the ante-natal clinic.

For the mother, some of the necessary things are sanitary pads, personal clothing (including night gowns, nursing brassieres, pants, etc.), toiletries (toilet soap, cream, powder etc.), bed linen, disinfectant and antiseptic.

For the baby, things necessary are baby clothes, safety pins (for fasting napkins), napkins, pampers, towels, toiletries (baby soap, oil, lotion, powder, etc.), baby's comb, blanker or shawl, baby's feeding unit (including feeding bottles, sterilizing unit, baby's cup, spoon, feeding bottle, brush, etc.), and baby's food, in case it is needed otherwise breast milk is most appropriate.

Post-natal Care

Post-natal care is the care required by a mother after child-birth. Six weeks after child birth, the nursing mother and the baby have to visit the post-natal clinic for check-up. At the post natal clinic, the mother is examined by the doctor. This is to ensure that she is alright. The doctor examines her weight, blood pressure, etc. The baby is also examined to ensure wellness. The mother is also examined to ensure wellness. The mother is also advised on how to take care of herself and her baby and also on family planning and baby's immunization.