



Sperm cells are capable of extremely rapid movement. This motility is accomplished by the movement of a whip-like "tail" connected to the genetic material-containing "head".

Different organs and structures of the two sexes develop out of the same basic structures, i.e. these organs are "homologous". The most obvious example of homologous sexual organs is the female clitoris and the male penis.

Anatomy of the female.



- R - anterior fornix
- S - pubic bone
- T - oviducts
- U - ovary
- V - uterus
- W - posterior fornix
- X - cervix
- Y - vagina
- Z - urethra

Vulva is the collective name for the external female sexual parts. The two outer "lips" of the vagina (called external labia) are included in the classification vulva.

The opening of the vagina varies in size depending on the individual, age and number of childbirths. Neither size of vaginal opening nor diameter of the vagina itself significantly increases with the amount of sexual contact.

The entrance to the vagina may be covered to some degree by the hymen, or "maidenhead", a membrane which differs in size, shape and strength with the individual. It may tear easily and painlessly at the first sexual contact (i.e. "loss of virginity") or it may prevent easy entry of the penis. Since the membrane does not completely block the passage to the uterus, pregnancy is theoretically possible without a rupture of the hymen. In many cases of sexual contact (especially in various forms of "petting"), the male ejaculates near or on the vulva without, in effect, entering the woman's vagina. It is possible that even though sexual intercourse does not occur, some sperm may swim through the fluid present on the outer lips of the vulva, into the vagina itself, and on through the cervix (opening to the uterus). Possibility of such an occurrence, however, is very slight. While fears of pregnancy resulting from ejaculation during petting are generally unfounded, ejaculation of semen on to the vulva should be avoided.

The vagina itself is the basic female organ of sexual intercourse, in that it receives the male organ and is the receptacle for sperm before they move toward the egg. Normally three to four inches long, the vagina is considerably elastic. It extends from the hymen past the cervix. It serves as the channel for the exit of tissues given off by the womb during menstruation, and as the last passage in childbirth. Vaginal tissue is lubricated by glands in the neck of the womb, and at the outside opening, by glands in the vulva. The inner end of the vagina, into which the cervix of the womb protrudes, receives semen and holds it in the seminal pool surrounding the opening of the womb.

The womb, or uterus, is the heavily muscled organ in which the foetus (future baby) develops. The specialized lining of the womb is called the endometrium. Ordinarily the uterus projects backward and upward from the vulva, i.e. the womb lies more or less horizontal with its mouth, or cervix, pointing backward and downward into the vagina. Shaped like a pear, the womb has, in its upper and larger part, openings to ducts called the fallopian tubes. The tubes are also called oviducts since they conduct ova (eggs) from the ovaries to the womb.

Ovaries are oval in shape, like small flattened eggs an inch and a half to two inches long. One ovary containing thousands of undeveloped ova, present since the woman's birth, lies on either side of the abdomen. Once a month one ovum is brought to maturity within the surrounding ovarian follicle and escapes from one of the ovaries. The fringed end of the fallopian tube which lies close to the ovary is believed to create a kind of suction or wave motion which wafts the egg into the tube and starts it on its path toward the womb. (Release of the egg will be considered more extensively in the section describing the menstrual cycle.)

Fertilization occurs in the fallopian tube. The fertilized egg moves to the side of the womb (uterine wall) where it implants itself for its nine month growth. If the egg is not fertilized it continues on its way and in about 14 days it is expelled with other substances in the menstrual flow.

Before describing the menstrual cycle, a short graphic explanation of conception follows obviously from the above anatomical descriptions:

