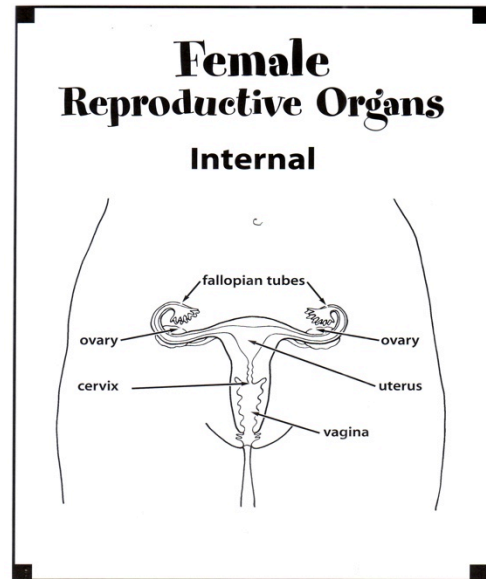


THE FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

The **female reproductive system** includes the **internal organs** such as the vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, as well as the **external organs**, including the vulva, vaginal opening, urinary opening, inner lips, outer lips, and clitoris.

Internal Reproductive Organs

Inside the body, the **vagina** is a muscular tunnel about 3 to 4 inches long. It runs from the vaginal opening (outside the body) to the opening of the uterus (inside the body). The vagina has 3 main functions: it provides a way for menstrual fluid to leave the body, it receives a man's penis during sexual intercourse, and it allows a baby to leave the mother's body during childbirth. This is why the vagina is also called the *birth canal*. The vagina is very elastic: it can adjust to fit a thin tampon to catch menstrual fluid, a penis, or even a baby. A healthy vagina releases fluids that keep it clean and protect it from infection. Normally, the fluid is clear or whitish. It may have a slight odor, but it doesn't smell bad.



The **uterus**, sometimes called the womb, is one of the strongest muscles in the human body. IT provides a safe place where a fertilized ovum (egg) can grow and develop into a baby. In women who aren't pregnant, the uterus is about the size of a fist – about 3 inches long. It is shaped like an upside down pear. During pregnancy, the uterus grows to about 12 inches long, but shrinks again after childbirth.

The **cervix** is the bottom part, or neck, of the uterus that connects to the vagina. In a woman who has never been pregnant, the cervix looks like a shiny, round button with a hole in the center. This opening is about as wide as a pencil point. The opening allows menstrual fluid to flow out of the uterus and is also the way sperm cells get into the uterus. During childbirth, the opening stretches to allow the baby to come out. It can reach 4 inches (10 centimeters) across, and closes up again after childbirth.

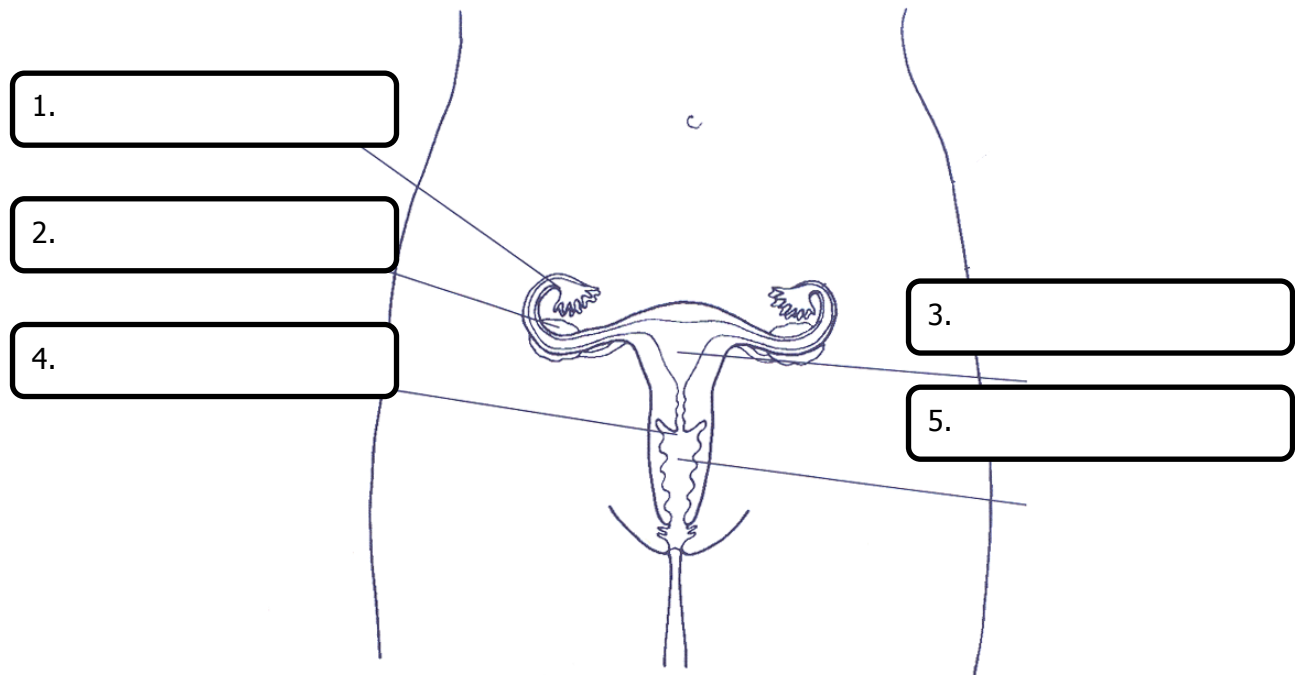
The **fallopian tubes** come out of each side of the uterus. They are about 5 inches long and as narrow as a strand of spaghetti. An ovum (egg) travels from the ovary to the uterus through the fallopian tube. The inside of each fallopian tube is lined with tiny hair-like structures called cilia. When an egg enters the tube, the cilia sway together and push the egg along. Unlike sperm, eggs can't swim on their own.

The **ovaries** are small organs, about the size of an almond. There is one ovary on each side of the uterus. Ovaries make the female hormone **estrogen** and **progesterone**. They also hold **eggs**. A girl is born with all of the eggs that she will ever need – more than 300,000. Each egg is covered by a thin capsule, called a follicle that protects it. Starting at puberty, one follicle and its egg starts to ripen at the start of each menstrual cycle.

REVIEW - THE FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Part 1: Look at the diagram below and label the body parts by writing the correct term from the word bank in the blank space.

Word Bank				
Ovary	Fallopian tube	Uterus	Cervix	Vagina



Part 2: Match the definition from Column 2 with the organ it describes in Column 1.

Reproductive Organs

1. ____ Cervix

2. ____ Vagina

3. ____ Uterus

4. ____ Fallopian Tube

5. ____ Ovary

Definitions

A. Pear-shaped organ in which the fetus grows and develops until birth.

B. Tubes through which a female's eggs travel on their way to the uterus; the place where eggs are fertilized by sperm.

C. Passage that leads from the uterus to outside the body.

D. Narrow end of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It stretches to allow a baby to be born.

E. Female primary sex organ in which egg cells and sex hormones are produced.