

Reproductive system

The reproductive system in both males and females is concerned with the continuation of the human race rather than forming part of the necessities for health or life. They are very different from each other as males and females play a different role in this process.

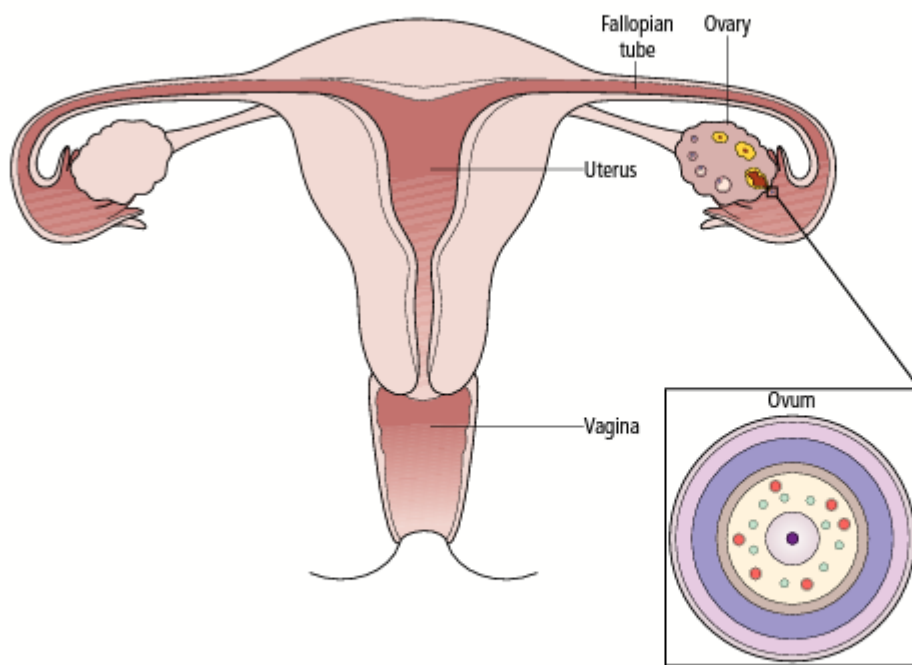
The primary sexual characteristics, i.e. male or female, are decided at conception, but the organs and structures are not able to perform their functionary role until puberty. At puberty the organs begin readying themselves for their function by producing hormones that provide the secondary sexual characteristics of adulthood.

During female adulthood the reproductive system undergoes ovulation – the release of an egg for fertilisation once a month. If the egg is not fertilised, the system undergoes a series of changes brought about by hormones and there is a menstrual flow. If the egg is fertilised the system maintains the pregnancy under the control of hormonal influence and assists in the birth process.

At menopause the female reproductive system has served its function. The organs stop producing the hormones needed to maintain their reproductive function and the female body undergoes changes.

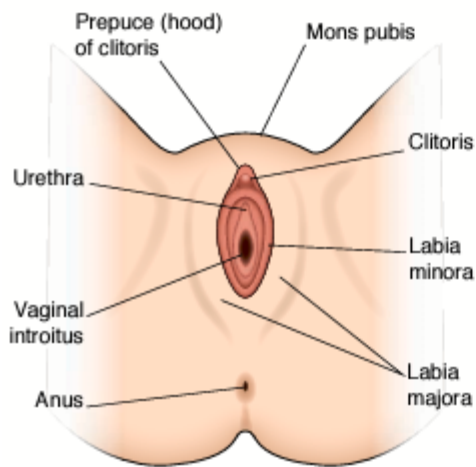
Female genitalia

The structures of internal female genitalia are as follows:



△ Structures of the internal female genitalia

- Ovaries: are oval-shaped organs that produce the ova or egg, usually one per month. They also produce hormones to control the menstrual cycle and maintain pregnancy in its early stages.



△ Structures of the external female genitalia

- Fallopian tubes: lay either side of the uterus and capture the ovum as it is released from the ovary and carry it to the uterus. It is here where the fertilisation of the egg by the sperm occurs.
- Uterus: a pear-shaped hollow organ, commonly called the womb. It has a thick, blood-enriched, muscular wall which receives the fertilised egg and is where the embryo will grow safely into a baby. It is the muscular walls of the uterus that contract during childbirth to deliver the baby.
- Cervix: the neck of the womb through which the sperm pass to fertilise the ovum and the baby must pass during child birth.
- Vagina: a strong muscular tube that connects the internal and external structures of the female reproductive system.

The external female genitalia structures are the:

- clitoris
- labia minora
- labia majora.

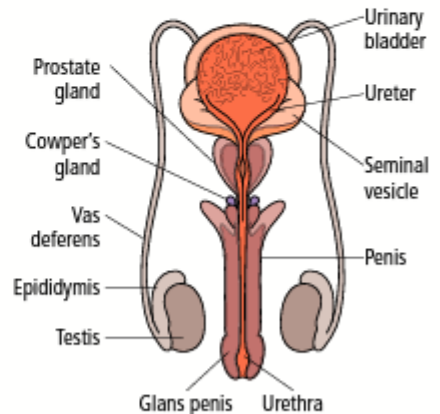
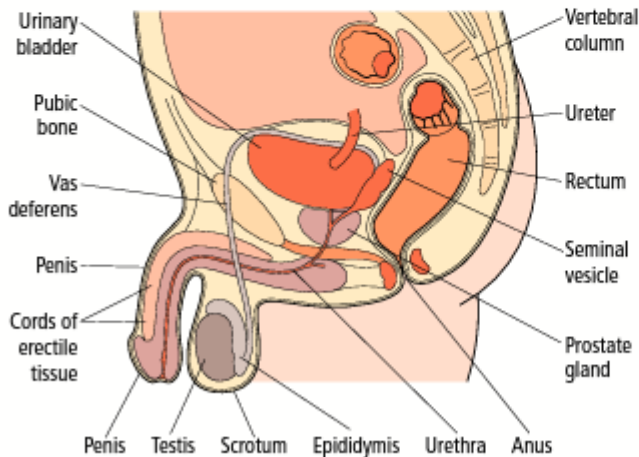
Male genitalia

The structures of the male reproductive system are as follows:

Testes: two egg-shaped organs of the male reproductive system that produce sperm.

Scrotum: a sac-like structure that contains the testes.

Penis: the external organ of the male reproductive system whose function is to deliver the sperm in fluid called semen to the ovum for fertilisation to occur. Both semen and urine are conveyed along a narrow tube called the urethra.



△ Structures of the external male genitalia