

The story of a human being starts with **fertilization**

A new human life begins at the moment when the genetic information contributed by the sperm from the father is combined with the genetic information contributed by the ovum (egg cell) from the mother. As soon as fertilization is completed, a new human being begins its life.

The person's unique genetic inheritance, and therefore also his or her sex, is determined *at that moment*. This is not a hypothetical human being but rather *the first stage of development of someone* who will later be named Paul or Virginia.

The zygote is the first stage of the **embryo**, in which the 23 chromosomes from the mother combine with the 23 chromosomes from the father: it is 0.15 millimeters wide.

The zygote gets its genetic information and life from the father's live sperm and from the mother's live ovum.

The embryo begins to divide as it manifests a new, autonomous life.

Embryo >



Zygote
1st stage
of development



2 cells
1 day

The embryo is an **organism**, a **living being** with a **human** genetic inheritance. Therefore it is in fact a **human being**.

Then the embryo divides into 2, 3, 4, 8, and more cells. Signals go back and forth among the cells, showing that the embryo is organizing itself. From the zygote to the fetus, everything takes place in an orderly fashion. The process is continuous.



4 cells
2 days



8 cells
3 days



10 to 30 cells
Morula ("little mulberry")
4 days



Implantation in the mother's uterus
Blastocyst
5 to 7 days

1 / Story of a little human being

Pregnancy is the condition of a woman who has conceived. It lasts from the time of fertilization to delivery.

The term of a pregnancy is calculated in two ways :

- In **months** of the embryo's development starting from the day of fertilization.
- In **weeks** without menstruation, counting from the first day of the last period.

If a woman's cycle is 28 days, fertilization takes place on the 14th day of her cycle.

When a woman notices that she is pregnant because her period is late, her baby is already at least 14 days old.

At 21 days, his heart will start beating.



Zygote

1st day

The embryo at the first stage of development.



The baby at 35 days
(3-5 mm)

1st month

The baby's heart beats. You can hear it on an ultrasound.



At 50 days
(17-22 mm)

2nd month

The limbs form. Fingers, mouth, nose, ears, eyes, and even eyelashes can be distinguished.



At 60 days
(3 cm, 11 g)

3rd month

The embryo is called a fetus. The brain and other organs are complete and functioning.



At 75 days
(10 cm, 45 g)

3rd month

The baby moves his hands and feet. His sex can be determined.



At 105 days
(15 cm, 200 g)

4th month

He sucks his thumb and swallows the amniotic fluid. His hands are completely formed.



At 135 days
(25 cm, 500 g)

5th month

His mother feels him moving.



At 165 days
(31 cm, 1,100 g)

6th month

He moves a lot. He begins to react to exterior sounds.



8th month

He assumes the position that he will stay in until delivery.



The embryo is human!

Frequently asked questions

“Isn't the embryo just a clump of cells?”

No. Some people talk about a “clump” or a “mass” as opposed to an “organism.” Yet from the start, the embryo is a living being that organizes itself through a process of continuous development. The point at which the sperm penetrates the ovum determines the position of the head and feet in the developing embryo.

From the moment of fertilization, a series of events (the expression of the embryo's genetic code, the synthesis of proteins) is launched with a view to the embryo's development. For example, the embryo produces hormones that stop the menstrual cycle of his mother and begin to prepare her breasts for nursing. So no, it is not a clump of cells.

“Is it a human being from the moment of fertilization?”

Yes, because a man and a woman cannot conceive anything other than a little human being. Yes, because the **unique human genetic inheritance** of a person is determined at that precise moment. If the human being does not begin at the moment of fertilization, it never begins, because where would any new information come from? Even the term “test-tube baby” shows that this is universally recognized.

“It's a human being, but is it a person?”

Yes. How can a human being not be a person? Historically, the only human beings who were not considered persons were slaves. If we decide that some human beings are not persons, then what kind of society do we live in?

“Is believing the embryo is a human being just a personal opinion?”

No. To agree that fertilization is the start of a new human being is not a matter of taste or opinion; it is a biological reality.

All the scientific evidence points in this direction and nothing can prove the contrary. No one can honestly doubt it.

“What makes a human embryo a human being?”

A being is human not because of its qualities, abilities or accomplishments but only because of its nature. He or she belongs to the human species, to the family of mankind, of all men and women, just like every one of us. He or she is therefore a human being.

“Does the embryo or fetus feel pain?”

Yes. Today we know that the fetus feels pain starting with the second trimester of pregnancy.

“The embryo depends on his mother, so is he a human being?”

Yes. Like any living being, the embryo needs a suitable environment in order to grow. We are all dependent at all stages of human life. We all need food and oxygen. *Would any one of us survive naked in Antarctica?* That does not make us any more or less human beings. Dependence, to whatever extent, does not change one's nature at all.

The fact that he is sheltered and nourished in his mother's body does not make a child in the womb part of the mother's body. He is different from her in every one of his cells.

“If the embryo doesn't look human, is he a human being?”

Yes. A human being is recognized not only by his appearance. Furthermore, the same individual over the course of a lifetime assumes different appearances as an embryo, baby, child, adult, and old person. The embryo looks like a human being looks at that age. We all passed through these developing embryonic forms, during which everything was already inscribed or recorded, even the color of our eyes!

Contrary to what you may read in some school textbooks, pregnancy begins when the sperm and egg join (fertilization), even though the woman is not aware of it until after the embryo attaches itself to the wall of the uterus (implantation).