

PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT

Since abortion advocates must concede that abortion kills a living human being, many try arguing that embryos and early fetuses aren't developed enough to be morally significant. The following timeline will help put such claims in better perspective.

FERTILIZATION

At the moment of fertilization, a new and unique human being comes into existence with its own distinct genetic code. Twenty-three chromosomes from the mother and twenty-three chromosomes from the father combine to result in a brand-new and totally unique genetic combination. Whereas the heart, lungs, and hair of a woman all share the same genetic code, her unborn child, from the moment of fertilization, has a separate genetic code that is all its own. There is enough information in this tiny zygote to control human growth and development for the rest of its life.

EIGHT DAYS (from fertilization)

At about eight days after conception, the fertilized ovum (called a blastocyst) implants in the lining of the uterus. It emits chemical substances which weaken the woman's immune system within the uterus so that this tiny "foreign" body is not rejected by the woman's body.

THREE WEEKS (from fertilization)

By the third week of pregnancy (approximately 21 days after fertilization), the heart begins to beat, pumping blood throughout the body.

SIX WEEKS (from fertilization)

By the sixth week, the brain emits waves which register on an EEG (electroencephalogram). This is the legal standard for determining if someone is alive after birth. The heartbeat can be heard with an ultrasonic stethoscope, the embryo responds reflexively to stimulus and may be able to feel pain.

EIGHT WEEKS (from fertilization)

By the eighth week of pregnancy, every organ is present and in place. Everything found in an adult human being can now be found in this tiny embryo which is now only about an inch and a half long.

TWENTY-ONE WEEKS (from fertilization)

Viability generally begins at 21-weeks (barely 1/2 of full gestation) when a baby has a 15% chance of survival.

BIRTH

The fetus initiates labor by stimulating the adrenal cortex to secrete a hormone that induces the mother's uterus to begin contracting. It is the fetus who determines when it's time for birth.