

## Science: The unborn is a human being

First, the unborn (the human zygote, embryo, or fetus) is a human being – a living human organism at the earliest developmental stages. This is a fact established by the science of embryology. Four features of the unborn human are important:

**Distinct.** The unborn has a DNA and body distinct from her mother and father. She develops her own arms, legs, brain, nervous system, heart, and so forth.

**Living.** The unborn meets the biological criteria for life. She grows by reproducing cells. She turns nutrients into energy through metabolism. And she can respond to stimuli.

**Human.** The unborn has a human genetic signature. She is also the offspring of human parents, and humans can only beget other humans.

**Organism.** The unborn is an organism (rather than a mere organ or tissue) – an individual whose parts work together for the good of the whole. Guided by a complete genetic code, she needs only the proper environment and nutrition to develop herself through the different stages of life as a member of our species.



At the moment when a human sperm penetrates a human ovum, or egg, a new entity comes into existence. “Zygote” is the name of the first cell formed at conception, the earliest developmental stage of the human embryo, followed by the “Morula” and “Blastocyst” stages. Is it human? Is it alive? Is it just a cell or is it an actual organism, a “being?” These are logical questions.

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# FACTS ABOUT ABORTION



An **abortion** is a procedure to end a pregnancy. It uses medicine or surgery to remove the embryo or foetus and placenta from the uterus.





### LEGAL FACTS

"**Pro-choice**" emphasises the right of women to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy.

"**Pro-life**" emphasises the right of the embryo or foetus to gestate to term and be born.

### "Legal Position"

In South Africa, a woman of any age can get an abortion on request with no reasons given if she is less than 13 weeks pregnant. If she is between 13 and 20 weeks pregnant, she can get the abortion if (a) her own physical or mental health is at stake, (b) the baby will have severe mental or physical abnormalities, (c) she is pregnant because of incest, (d) she is pregnant because of rape, or (e) she is of the personal opinion that her economic or social situation is sufficient reason for the termination of pregnancy. If she is more than 20 weeks pregnant, she can get the abortion only if her or the fetus' life is in danger or there are likely to be serious birth defects.

# MAKING A DECISION

With any unplanned pregnancy there are 3 choices available to consider: 1. Abortion: A very sensitive decision. 2. Adoption: You may be thinking about continuing with the pregnancy and placing the child for adoption. 3. Parenting: Continuing with the pregnancy and choose to be a parent.

For some the decision will be clear, while for others it may be a difficult choice to make.

It is important to research all the facts.

### FACTS ABOUT THE ZYGOTE: (DAY 1-4)

The zygote is composed of human DNA and other human molecules, so its nature is undeniably human and not some other species. The new human zygote has a genetic composition that is absolutely unique to itself, different from any other human that has ever existed, including that of its mother. This DNA includes the complete design of the baby.



Life from day 1



9 Weeks pregnant

### FACTS ABOUT FETAL DEVELOPMENT: (DAY 15-2 WEEKS)

A human person's life begins at fertilisation when the father's sperm penetrates the mother's egg. From the time of fertilisation, a baby's unique DNA and genetic makeup are complete from sex to hair colour to height as an adult. The heart begins to beat just three weeks after fertilisation. Brain waves can be detected at six weeks after fertilisation. At two months after fertilisation, all of the baby's organ systems are complete.



How your baby grows



Weeks of Pregnancy

### FACTS ABOUT ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

One reason to place a **baby** for **adoption** is that it can be a way for prospective birth mothers to find something positive in a situation they may initially view as negative. Placing a **baby** with people who desperately want to become parents and making their dream come true gives many women a sense of pride and happiness.



Adoption is a great gift for a waiting family



Dreams can come true