



life

# A RELATIONSHIP LIKE NO OTHER

## LIFE IN THE WOMB

The ways in which our bodies change, grow and develop in those first 9 months are the most **incredible** of our lives. The relationship we have with our **mothers** during pregnancy is also amazing!



This started with **fertilisation**. **Life begins at this moment**, when the father's sperm combines with the mother's egg.



Your DNA, a completely **unique** genetic code, was formed. It is different from anyone else's in the world. This genetic code links the child with the mother in some ways and with the father in others, but the child is not a copy of either of them – **he or she is a new, separate and original human individual**.

The mother's body recognises this fact and **responds physically** to make itself a hospitable environment:

- the body **releases hormones** signifying the **presence of a child**
- the body suppresses the mother's **immune system** so that the child is not attacked as a foreign object in the way that other intrusions might be.
- this does put her at slightly raised risk of certain illnesses, but importantly for the baby, **it allows the body to build the placenta** to provide a **safe home** for the child.



## The placenta

In a sense, the placenta is a like physical metaphor for this mum-baby relationship. Half is from the child and half from the mother's uterus.

The placenta **connects the child to the mother** and allows them to obtain all the nutrients and oxygen they need to grow, while at the same time disposing of waste from the child. The child could not survive without the mother, and yet it is not part of her in the same way as an organ is. The baby is a **separate entity**, with a personal blood flow which never mixes with the mother's and begins pumping around the tiny body when the **heart began to beat at 21 days**. Or when the mother is 5 weeks pregnant (LMP)



## Caring for the baby

A great deal now depends on the mother's natural care for the child. Everything she does can have an **impact on the future of the child**, from the foods she eats to the chemicals she puts into her body. It is for this reason that pregnant women avoid alcohol and smoking.

All this special care allows the tiny body time to grow. Although the mother only starts **to feel the baby kick** at around 16 weeks, he/she has already been kicking and moving for a month. According to some scientists, shortly after this the child begins to have the biological capacity to **feel pain** and unpleasant sensations.

Also around this time, it is thought that unborn babies learn to **recognize both their mother's and their father's voices**. Typically, these voices have a very calming effect, but if he or she is exposed to persistent loud noises or shouting, the child's heart rate and even stress hormones can be increased.



lifecharity.org.uk