

The Human Life Cycle

Introduction

Like all living things, humans (that's us) have a life cycle. Every human being goes through the same stages of life in the same order. Most people who live in wealthy countries live to between 60 and 90 years of age, although some people live to be over 100 years of age! Read on to find out about the stages in the human life cycle:

Foetus



Ultrasound of a foetus

All people start off life as a foetus in their mother's belly. A foetus grows in the womb surrounded by liquid and gets its nutrition through a tube called the umbilical cord. When a woman has a foetus growing inside her, we say that she is pregnant. Doctors can take a photo of a foetus using an ultrasound scanner.

Baby

After around nine months (sometimes a bit longer; sometimes a bit less) the mother gives birth. From birth to around two years of age, we say a child is a baby (we count people's ages from the day that they are born). Babies cannot do much for themselves and need to be fed (with milk at first, then later with food) and have their nappies changed.



Baby

Child



Boy

From three years old to ten years old, you are a 'child'. Children are more independent than babies, and they continue to become more independent as they get older; for example, they can eat food that is given to them and dress themselves. Between three and five years old, children start to go to nursery and to school.



Girl

Adolescent



Adolescents

The World Health Organisation defines an adolescent as being a young person aged between 10 and 19. Puberty results in changes in the body during this stage of the life cycle. There is even more brain development during this time. Adolescents are more independent than children; for instance, they can get jobs to earn money for themselves and

can learn to drive at seventeen. However, adolescents still live with their parents and rely on them to pay the bills!

Adulthood

Although eighteen and nineteen end in 'teen', people of this age are actually now adults. The human body is at its peak of fitness and strength between 18/19 and 39. There is still some growth but not of height. Adults usually live independently in their own houses. Most adults get full-time jobs to pay for their own food, bills and other things that they buy. Adults can also have babies of their own!



Adults

Elderly



Elderly people

By the age of around 67, most people have worked hard throughout their lives and saved up enough money so that they can retire (stop working). Elderly people are not as strong as when they were younger and get tired more easily. However, they can still have fun and stay active, like the couple in the photo. If their children have had children, they will be grandparents.

Summary

In summary, the human life cycle has six main stages: foetus, baby, child, adolescent, adult and elderly. Although we describe the human life cycle in stages, people continually and gradually change from day to day throughout all of these stages.