

Gestational age

Gestational [age](#) is a measure of the age of a pregnancy which is taken from the beginning of the woman's last menstrual period, or the corresponding age of the gestation as estimated by a more accurate method if available

The staging of human embryos, as distinct from seriation, depends on a morphological scheme devised by Streeter and completed by O'Rahilly, who proposed the term Carnegie stages. To avoid misconceptions and errors, and to place new findings in perspective, it is necessary to summarize the essentials of the Carnegie system: (1) Twenty-three stages cover the embryonic period, i. e. the first 8 postfertilizational weeks of development. (2) The system is based on internal as well as external features, and the use of only external criteria is subject to serious limitations. For example, precise delineation of stages 19-23 and of the embryonic-fetal transition depends on histological examination. (3) Prenatal measurements are not an integral component of the staging system, and hence a stage should never be assigned merely on the basis of embryonic length. A 20-mm embryo, for example, could belong to any of three stages. Measurements, however, are important for the assessment of age, and very few measurements are available for staged embryos. Presented here and based on accurate staging are the maximum diameter of the chorionic sac, the crown-heel length, the greatest length exclusive of the lower limbs, the biparietal diameter, the head circumference, the length of the hindbrain, the total length of the brain, and the lengths of the limbs as well as of their segments, including the foot length. (4) Prenatal ages are also not an integral part of the staging system and hence a stage should never be assigned merely on the basis of prenatal age. Ages, however, are of clinical importance and their estimate has been rendered more precise by accurate timing of fertilization followed by ultrasonography. Prenatal age is postfertilizational and hence some 2 weeks less than the postmenstrual interval. The term gestational age is ambiguous and should be discarded. Presented here is a new graph showing proposed estimates of age in relation to stages and based on current information ¹⁾

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O'Rahilly R, Müller F. Developmental stages in human embryos: revised and new measurements. Cells Tissues Organs. 2010;192(2):73-84. doi: 10.1159/000289817. Epub 2010 Feb 26. PMID: 20185898.

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