

PAIN *of the* UNBORN

What does an unborn child feel during an abortion?

While an unborn child cannot verbally express the pain she experiences, all biological indicators suggest unborn children are capable of feeling pain by at least 20 weeks.

● 18 Days *Brain*

The brain begins to take shape only 18 days after conception. By 20 days, the brain has already differentiated into forebrain, midbrain, and hindbrain, and the spinal cord has started to grow.(1)

● 5 Weeks *Pain Receptors*

Four or five weeks after conception, pain receptors appear around the mouth, followed by nerve fibers, which carry stimuli to the brain. By 18 weeks, pain receptors have appeared throughout the body. Around week 6, the unborn child first responds to touch.(2, 3)

● 6 Weeks *Cortex*

In weeks 6-18, the cerebral cortex develops. By 18 weeks the cortex has a full complement of neurons. In adults, the cortex has been recognized as the center of pain consciousness.(3)

● 8 Weeks *Thalamus*

During weeks 8-16, the thalamus develops, functioning as the main relay center in the brain for sensory impulses going from the spinal cord to the cortex.(1)

“The neural pathways are present for pain to be experienced quite early by unborn babies.”

– Steven Calvin, perinatologist, University of Minnesota



Scientific evidence suggests abortion is excruciatingly painful for the unborn child.

“At 20 weeks, the fetal brain has the full complement of brain cells present in adulthood, ready and waiting to receive pain signals from the body, and their electrical activity can be recorded by standard electroencephalography (EEG)”

– Dr. Paul Ranalli, neurologist, University of Toronto

● 14-18 Wks *Nerve Tracts*

In week 18, nerve tracts connecting the spinal cord and the thalamus are established, and nerves from the thalamus first contact the cortex in week 20. Nerve fibers not routed through the thalamus have already reached the cortex by 14 weeks. (3,4)

● 18 Wks *Stress Hormones*

As early as 18 weeks, stress hormones are released by an unborn child injected by a needle, just as they are when adults feel pain. Hormone levels in those babies decrease as pain-relievers are supplied.(7)

● *Before 18 Weeks?*

Even before nerve tracts are fully established, the unborn child may feel pain; studies show anencephalic infants, whose cortex is severely reduced if not altogether missing, may experience pain as long as other neurological structures are functioning.(6)

● 20 Wks *All Parts in Place*

With pain receptors, spinal cord, nerve tracts, thalamus, and cortex in place, all anatomical links needed for pain transmission to the brain, for feeling pain, are present.

An unborn child at 20 weeks gestation “is fully capable of experiencing pain... Without question, [abortion] is a dreadfully painful experience for any infant subjected to such a surgical procedure.”

– Robert J. White, MD., Ph.D. professor of neurosurgery, Case Western Reserve University

Highest Pain Receptor Density Before Birth

Between weeks 20 and 30, an unborn child has more pain receptors per square inch than at any other time, before or after birth, with only a very thin layer of skin for protection.(4)

Pain Inhibition Not Fully Developed Until Later

Mechanisms that inhibit or moderate the experience of pain do not begin to develop until weeks 30-32. Any pain the unborn child experiences before these mechanisms form is likely worse than the pain an older child or adult experiences.(4)

The unborn’s experience of pain may actually be heightened

An unborn child has less legal protection from feeling pain than commercial livestock.

In a slaughterhouse, a method of slaughter is deemed legally humane only if “all animals are rendered insensible to pain by a single blow or gunshot or an electrical, chemical, or other means that is rapid and effective, before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut.” (Section 2 of the Humane Slaughter Act, 7 USC 1902).

By contrast, D&E abortions, performed as late as 24 weeks (well after the child begins to feel pain), involve the dismemberment of the unborn child by a pair of sharp metal forceps.(9) Instillation methods of abortion (performed even in the third trimester) involve the replacement of up to one cup of amniotic fluid with a concentrated salt solution, which the unborn child inhales as the salt burns her skin. The child lives in this condition for up to an hour. In neither of these techniques is the unborn child provided with any form of anesthesia.(10-13)



Maternal anesthesia offers little pain protection for the unborn child.

For maternal anesthesia to provide adequate pain protection for the unborn child, it would have to avoid metabolism by the mother’s liver, enter her blood stream, cross the placental membrane, reach the unborn child’s circulation system in sufficient concentration, and cross the child’s blood/brain barrier. The dose of anesthesia necessary to pass all five steps would endanger the mother.(4)

Only anesthesia administered directly to the fetus can sufficiently curb the pain caused by surgery or abortion. In fact, a *London Telegraph* survey found that 80% of British neuroscientists responding favored the use of fetal anesthesia for abortions conducted between weeks 11-24.(14)

The public supports the dissemination of information on fetal pain.

An April 15-17, 2004, Zogby poll of more than 1,200 people found 77% saying that they favored laws requiring that women who are 20 weeks or more along in their pregnancies be given information about fetal pain before having an abortion.

Abortionists callously ignore the suffering of the unborn.

In a lawsuit seeking an injunction on the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban, abortionist Dr. Timothy Johnson was questioned on fetal pain:

“Does the fetus feel pain?” Judge Richard C. Casey asked Johnson, saying he had been told that studies of a type of abortion usually performed in the second trimester had concluded they do.

Johnson said he did not know, adding that he knew of no scientific research on the subject.

The judge then pressed Johnson on whether he ever thought about fetal pain while he performs the abortion procedure that involves dismemberment. Another doctor a day earlier had testified that a fetus sometimes does not immediately die after limbs are pulled off.

“I guess whenever I..” Johnson began before the judge interrupted.

“Simple question, doctor. Does it ever cross your mind?” Casey pressed.

Johnson said it did not.

“Never crossed your mind?” the judge asked again.

“No,” Johnson answered. (excerpted from AP, 15)

Notes: 1. Blackburn, ST. *Maternal, Fetal, and Neonatal Physiology*. 2nd ed (2003). 2. Ibid. 573 3. Vanhatalo, S & van Nieuwenhuizen, O. “Fetal Pain?” *Brain and Development*. 22 (2000) 4. “Expert Report of Kanwaljeet S. Anand, MBBS, D.Phil.” Northern District of the US District Court in California. 15 Jan 2004. 5. Blackburn 6. Van Assche, FA. “Anencephalics as Organ Donors.” *Am J Obstet Gyn* 163 (1990) 7. Garg, A & Rovnaghi, C. “Fetal Response to Intra-Uterine Needling: Is It Pain? Does It Matter?” *Pediatric Research*. V 51, No 1, 2002. 8. Collett, TS. “Fetal Pain Legislation: Is it Viable?” *Pepperdine Law Review*. Jan 2003. 9. Hern, W. *Abortion Practice*. Philadelphia: JB Lippincott, 1984. 10. Kerenyi, T. “Intraamniotic techniques.” *Abortion and Sterilization*. ed. Hodgson, 1981. 11. Galen, RS and Chauhan, P et al. “Fetal pathology and mechanism of fetal death ...” *Am J Obst Gyn* 120 (1974). 12. Lyon, J. “Abortion Paradox: A Live Baby.” *York Daily Record*. 21 Aug 1982. 13. Corson, S, et al. *Fertility Control*, 1985. 14. Sheridan, M & Highfield, R. “Growing Pains.” *London Telegraph*. 12 Oct 2000. 15. Neumeister, L. “Judge Asks Doctor If Fetus Can Feel Pain,” Associated Press, 1 Apr 2004. *Where an author measured fetal development by gestational age, all numbers have been converted to fetal age.* 9/04