The Human Egg

The egg is the female reproductive cell, also called an ovum. The egg cell is one of the largest cells in the human body, and is visible to the naked eye. Egg cells are typically measure 0.12 millimeters in diameter.

Egg cells are produced in the female’s ovaries, and ovulation occurs once a month. Ovulation is when a egg cell is released from the ovaries, and usually only one egg is released each month in humans. Sometimes, two or more eggs can be released during ovulation (but more than 2 is rare.)

The egg cell is enclosed by a thick membrane, called the zona. On the outside of the zona are protective cells called the corona radiata. Inside the egg, there is a large amount of cytoplasm. Inside the cytoplasm there is a nucleus that contains chromosomes. Healthy, unfertilized human egg cells contain 23 chromosomes, whereas somatic cells (body cells, such as a skin cell) contain 46 chromosomes. Human egg cells contain a very small amount of yolk that is used to nourish a developing embryo.

An unfertilized human egg cell

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