

Figure 6: Conception

“Well, they’ve got it wrong, haven’t they?” Mum replied. “The egg only lives for 12 hours or so unless it’s fertilised, and it has to be pushed along by the action of the tube, so it doesn’t go that far before it dies.

“Now, if one sperm penetrates the egg, something extraordinary happens. The outer membrane of the egg seals itself off so that no further sperm can enter.”

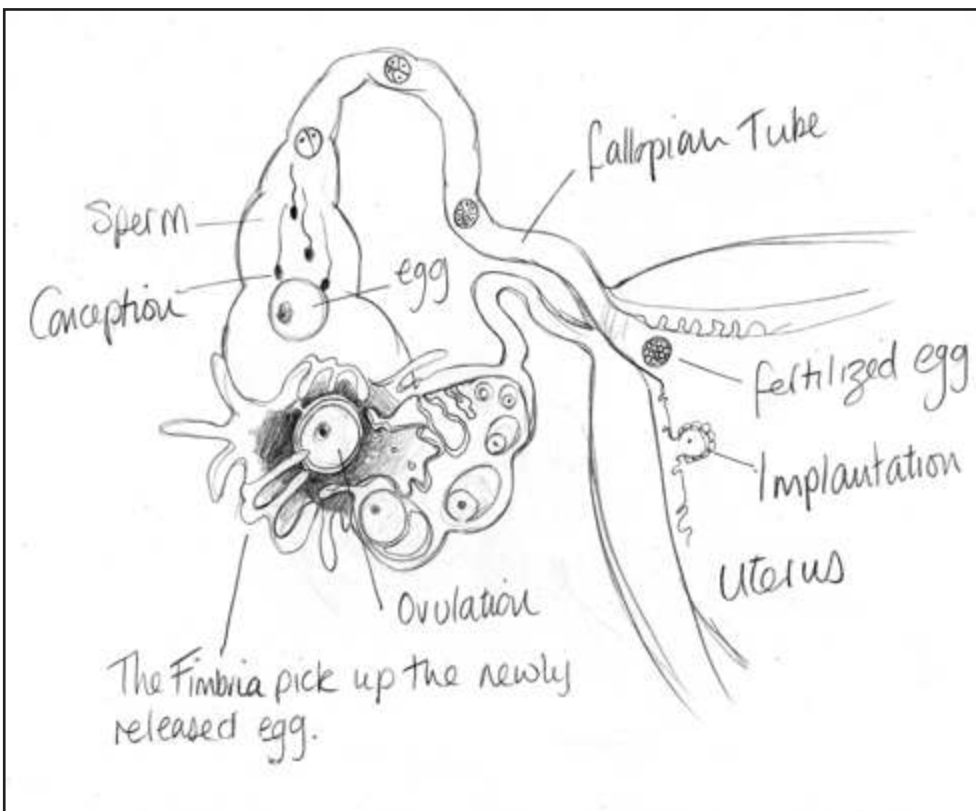


Figure 7: Conception and implantation

Josie cupped her face in her hands. “And that was the beginning of me!” she exclaimed.

“Not quite. There’s a bit of work to do before the egg and sperm combine, and it can take up to about 24 hours. It’s when the two fuse that **conception** takes place, when the male and female **gametes** join together to form a new human life.