

Name _____



How Do Jellyfish Reproduce?

Jellyfish have a fascinating way of reproducing. They go through multiple stages during their life cycle, making their reproduction process unique. Most jellyfish reproduce sexually, which means a male and female jellyfish are involved. The male jellyfish releases sperm into the water, where it meets eggs released by the female jellyfish. This fertilization creates tiny larvae called planulae.

The planulae float in the water for a short time before settling on a surface, like a rock or coral. Once attached, they grow into a polyp. A polyp looks like a tiny plant and stays fixed in place. Over time, the polyp begins to bud, releasing small jellyfish called ephyrae. These ephyrae grow into adult jellyfish, completing the cycle.

Some jellyfish can also reproduce asexually, meaning only one parent is needed. During the polyp stage, jellyfish can clone themselves by producing more polyps without fertilization.

Jellyfish do not have a gestation period like mammals. Instead, the entire process from planula to adult can take a few weeks to several months, depending on the species and environment. Jellyfish typically release hundreds or even thousands of eggs at a time, but most do not survive to adulthood due to predators and ocean conditions.

Jellyfish do not care for their young after releasing them. The planulae and polyps must survive on their own from the very beginning. Despite this lack of care, jellyfish have survived for millions of years due to their large numbers and unique life cycle.