

# CELL DIVISION

## INTRODUCTION

All living things "start" as a single cell.

A cell is the smallest most fundamental unit of life. Cells are a very complex, highly organized form of matter (physical substance).

The instructions to build a cell are coded as **genetic information** in its **genes**. **Cell numbers increase by cell division.**

All cells are descendants from cells that have divided and cells must divide to produce ancestors. **Descendants** "follow" but **ancestors** "precede (come before)".

By definition a **mother cell** divides into two **daughter cells**. Each cell division is a cellular "generation" in which a parent gives rise to offspring (child).



## UNICELLULAR AND MULTICELLULAR ORGANISMS

Some organisms are nothing more than a single cell "all their life" so we call them **unicellular**. Cell division is a cell's way of reproducing. The cell divides into two cells that usually look identical. For this reason, cell division is sometimes called "**binary fission**" (division).

Organisms such as you and I are a collection of many cells, so we are called **multicellular**. Some multicellular organisms reproduce by a method very similar to simple cell division - they just split (break into parts) into two pieces. But most multicellular organisms reproduce by a more complicated method.

It is important to understand that all **multicellular organisms start as a single cell**. We become multicellular by a series of cell divisions very similar to the way unicellular organisms reproduce.

There are about 100 trillion ( $10^{14}$ ) cells in your body. All of these cells were derived from multiple cell divisions. Each cell inherited (receive) that genetic information from a previous cell. A zygote is a single cell created by the union of two sex cells which are called gametes.

Each cell grows (increase) in size between each cell division. This "growth phase" is an important time for a cell because during growth a cell feeds (eat) and increases in size.

Genetic information is contained in a very long molecule called **DNA**. That stands for "DeoxyriboNucleic Acid". DNA's message provides (gives) information for the cell. Long stretches of DNA are organized into **chromosomes**. During cell division it is extremely important that the daughter cells inherit the correct and complete chromosome(s) from their mother cell.

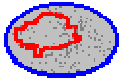
## **EUCARIOTIC AND PROKARIOTIC CELLS**

Eukaryotes are organisms that hold their chromosomes in a nucleus. Eukaryotes have many other things (organelles) in them beside a **nucleus** but, by definition, all eukaryotes have a nucleus. People are eukaryotes.

**Prokaryotes** do not have a nucleus so their genetic material is free to float around throughout the cell.

All prokaryotes have a single, "naked" [no bound proteins] (double) strand of DNA, as a circular chromosome. Prokaryotes have only one type of cell division - fission. Before fission the cell makes a copy of its DNA so that it now has two copies of its genetic material.

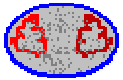
One copy is distributed to each half of the cell. One copy of DNA goes to each side of the cell. Then a membrane (thin tissue) and cell wall form dividing the cell in two. Any other materials inside the cell are distributed between the two halves at random (without method). What matters is that both cells end up with identical copies of genetic information.



**Chromosome duplicates**



**Chromosomes move to opposite sides**



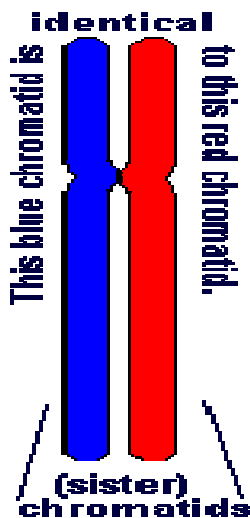
**Cell membrane and cell wall is created and it divides the cell into two cells**



Eukaryotic cells have a more complex genetic system - complex in terms of how they package their DNA and complex in terms of how they distribute it in cell division.

Eukaryotes package their genetic information in chromosomes that are very different from prokaryotic chromosomes. Each eukaryotic chromosome contains a linear length of (double-stranded) DNA.

Eukaryotic chromosomes also contain a lot of protein. This complex of DNA and protein is called **chromatin**. So a eukaryotic chromosome is made of chromatin (DNA and proteins) but a prokaryotic chromosome is just "naked" DNA.



Obviously, the proteins that condense the DNA are very important to pack (contain) all that information into a nucleus. During most stages of cell divisions we see the chromosomes as X-shaped objects composed of two "chromatids". The ends of the chromatids are called **telomeres** ("telos" is Greek for "end") and the point where they are joined (united) is called a **centromere** although it isn't always at the center. It is important to understand that these X-shaped chromosomes are made of two identical pieces of (double-stranded) DNA. That is, the "left side" is identical to the "right side". Because they are identical the two **chromatids** on the same chromosome are called sister chromatids.

## CELL DIVISION IN EUKARYOTES

Cell division in eukaryotes is more complicated than cell division in prokaryotes because eukaryotes have:

- ❑ a nucleus
- ❑ more than one chromosome
- ❑ two types of nuclear division - **mitosis and meiosis**.

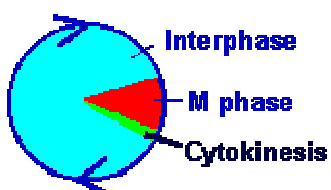
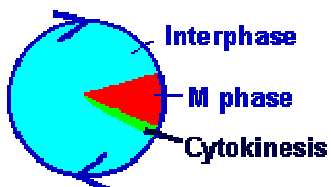
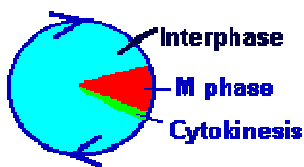
Mitosis and meiosis refer to the **division of the nucleus** and this is only a part of cell division. **Mitosis produces identical nuclei** ("nuclei" is plural for nucleus) so it is similar to prokaryote fission BUT it is not the same in detail. Mitosis is the dominant type of nuclear division and its purpose (intention) is to increase (greater in number) the number of nuclei. Most mitosis is followed by cell division so most of the time mitosis increases cell numbers but **mitosis only increases the number of nuclei**. Mitosis is used in **asexual reproduction** - reproduction without sex. (Vegetative propagation, cloning, budding, etc.).

**Meiosis produces diverse nuclei.** Meiosis is a very specialized type of nuclear division occurring only in cells that will become gametes (sex cells). **So meiosis is required for sexual reproduction**; reproduction using gametes.

## THE CELL CYCLE



Eukaryotic cells go through a **cell cycle**. The cell cycle is a series of stages through which the cell passes between divisions and it is composed of three stages:



1. <b>Interphase</b>	is the period between divisions when nothing seems to be happening.
2. <b>Nuclear Division</b>	is when the genetic material is dividing and you can see the chromosomes. Therefore this is often called <b>M phase</b> . During M phase one mother nucleus becomes two daughter nuclei.
3. <b>Cytokinesis</b>	divides the cytoplasm of the mother cell into two daughter cells

## THE INTERPHASE

Interphase dominates the cell cycle and it is often called the "gap phase" in the cell cycle because it represents a period in which nothing seems to be happening. We often abbreviate it as G phase to distinguish it from M phase. Today, interphase is subdivided into these three subphase:

3. **G1 (or Gap 1)** occurs after cytokinesis, the last cell division, but before the start of DNA synthesis.
4. **S phase** (or Synthesis phase) is the time when DNA is synthesized. It is during S phase that DNA replicates.
5. **G2 (or Gap 2)** occurs after S phase but before the next M phase.

G1 is "early interphase" and cells in G1 have only one centrosome. The centrosome is usually found by following the microtubule filaments (thin strand) that radiate (extend) from it later in M phase. Microtubules are tiny tubular structures made of protein and they are responsible for most of the cell's movements. In most species the centrosome is made up of a pair of **centrioles**.

Of course after G1 comes S phase when the DNA duplicates itself. During S phase each single chromatid is duplicated to give us the identical sister chromatids. During G2 the centrosome is duplicated so by late G2 the cell has two centrosomes.

It is crucial that the centrosome replicates during G2 because a cell must have two centrosomes to guide the chromosomes during the M phase that follows. Any cell with two centrosomes has successfully completed S phase and is in late G2.

## MITOSIS

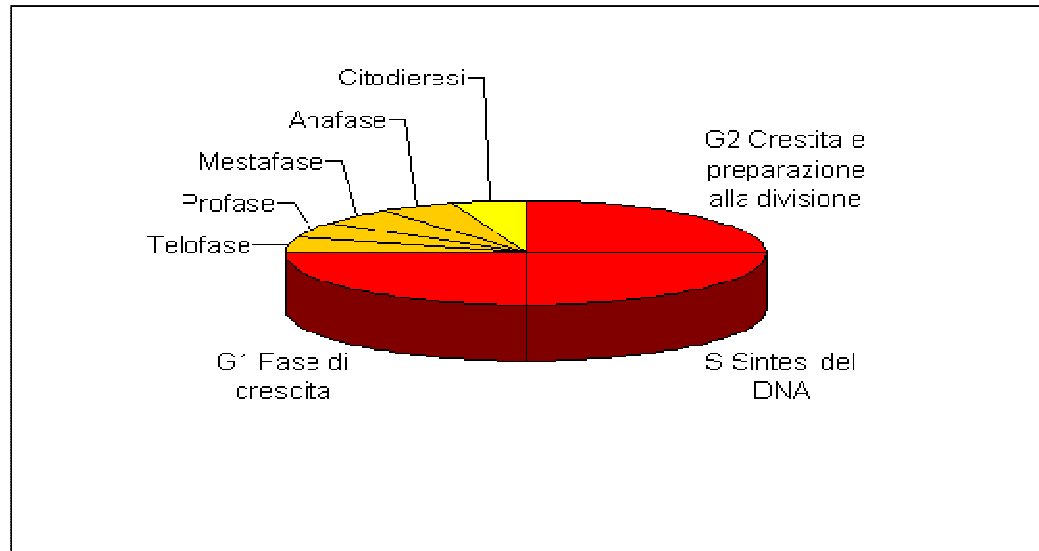
Mitosis is specifically designed to distribute chromosomes equally (in an equal manner). Mitosis distributes exact (the same) copies of genetic material. The main function of mitosis is to increase the number of identical nuclei. When followed by cytokinesis, as it usually is, mitosis increases cell numbers.

Many species, including some multicellular species, can reproduce by mitosis. These are called **clones** and this method of reproduction is called **asexual reproduction** often called **vegetative** reproduction or vegetative **propagation**. All asexual reproduction (cloning, vegetative reproduction and vegetative propagation) is mitotic reproduction.

We humans reproduce via meiosis BUT, once the zygote is formed, mitosis dominates and is responsible for making EVERY nucleus in your body except the gametes (sperm and egg cells).

Mitosis is a flow of events but we have divided it into four obvious stages:

1. Prophase
2. Metaphase
3. Anaphase
4. Telophase



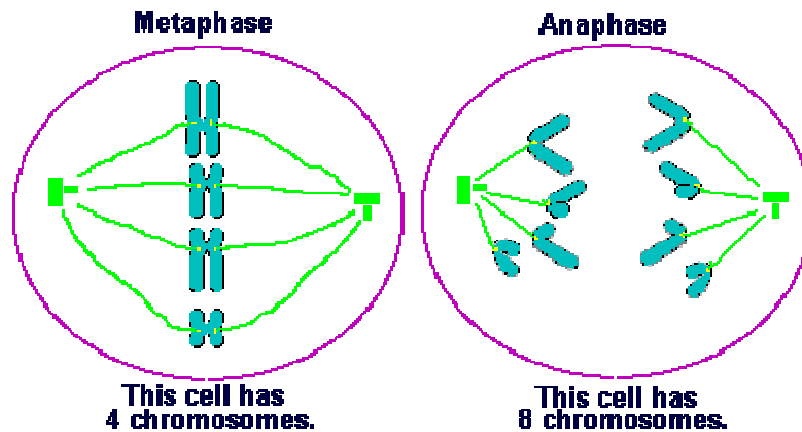
**Prophase** is the first phase of mitosis but it's named "pro" which is Greek for "before". During prophase the chromatin condenses (concentrate) into chromosomes. They move to opposite sides of the cell and develop spindle fibers (thin rod). During prophase, the centrosomes move to opposite "poles" dragging (pull) their spindles along.

Once the microtubules attach to the chromosome they act as a "rope" allowing the centrosome to orchestrate (arrange) the movements of chromosomes in the next two phases.

**Metaphase** is well named because "meta" is Greek for between. All the chromosomes come to line up midway between the two centrosomes. The plane upon which the centromeres are arranged is called the metaphase plate. This phase lasts for about an hour.

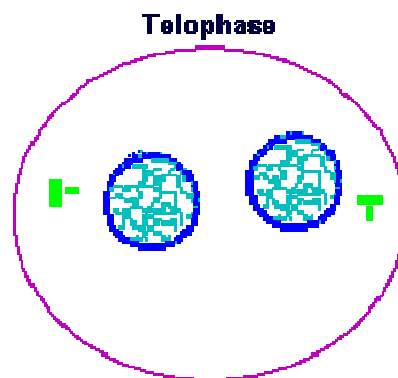
At **anaphase** the centromere of each chromosome breaks down the middle and the two sister chromatids move to opposite centrosomes. It is at anaphase that "true" genetic division.

When the two chromatids come apart, when the centromere breaks at anaphase, the two chromatids become chromosomes. Therefore, during anaphase, each chromosome becomes two separate chromosomes at that moment of chromatid separation and we now have two chromosomes from each chromosome.



That means, during anaphase and indeed until cytokinesis occurs, the cell has twice as many chromosomes as "normal". But they are all "half-chromosomes" made of just one chromatid.

Once the newly created chromosomes reach their poles, anaphase is over and we enter the next and last phase of mitosis – telophase. "Telos" is Greek for "end". **Telophase** is the point in mitosis when the new nuclei are formed. A nuclear membrane forms around both bundles of chromosomes at each pole. This creates two nuclei..



## CYTOKINESIS

As a cell enters cytokinesis it has two nuclei formed by nuclear division during M phase. **During cytokinesis the cytoplasm is divided.** Mitosis ensures that both nuclei have exactly equal genetic information, but cytokinesis distributes the organelles (mitochondria, ribosomes, etc.) and cytoplasm randomly.

## Revision corner:

