



fun fact

You know how newborns have two soft spots, called fontanel, where the bones don't completely cover the brain?

Well, they're usually gone by 18 months, but did you know the skull doesn't fully fuse until adulthood? Just a heads-up.

9-MONTH MIRACLE

Skull

Inside the head of a 52-day-old embryo, a remarkable construction project is taking place: Tissues are starting to build a skull to house the growing brain. While cells called osteoblasts deposit bone in the membranes at the front and sides of the head, cartilage plates that appeared in the sixth week are fusing to form a protective cradle underneath the brain. By the end of the fifth month, these bones all fit together like a patchwork quilt, forming the skull's dome, palate, and face. The bones are connected by bands of flexible tissue so they can shift and overlap during birth, letting that big head squeeze through a very tight spot. —Diane A. Kelly