Sex before you're born: Early organism, ancient human cousin, had kinky mating rituals

Until now, little was known about the biology of *Fractofusus,* which lived in the ocean 565 million years ago.

But new research has revealed a dual mode of reproduction. In one method, the organism sprouted young from its body in much the same way that a spider plant or strawberry plant multiplies.

In another, it produced seeds or tiny buds into the water column.

This allowed the ancient life-form to produce clones that could colonise a new patch of seabed.

The study is published in the journal Nature.

Fractofusus — originally called "the Spindle" until it was formally described in 2007 — appeared in the Ediacaran age.

It is among the earliest-known, complicated organisms, emerging from an ocean of simple multi-cellular microbes.

"It has a very distinct body plan that is totally unique," said Dr. Emily Mitchell, the paper's lead author, from the University of Cambridge.

"There is nothing like *Fractofusus* around today, which makes trying to understand anything about it really, really difficult."

She added: "We knew very little, apart from the fact it lived in the deep sea, it has a relatively large surface area – so it got its nutrients from the water column.

"We literally had no idea how it reproduced prior to this study."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Sex life of ancient Fractofusus organism revealed