

Human embryo research restrictions: Scientists move to drop 14-day limit on research

For the last 40 years, the rule, which is law in some countries and a guideline in others, has served as an important stop sign for embryonic research. It has provided a clear signal to the public that scientists wouldn't grow babies in labs. To researchers, it gave clarity about what research they could pursue.

Now, however, a key scientific body is ready to do away with the 14-day limit. The action would come at a time when scientists are making remarkable progress in growing embryonic cells and watching them develop.

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By allowing both normal and artificial embryos to continue developing after two weeks, the end of the self-imposed limit could unleash impressive but ethically charged new experiments on extending human development outside the womb.

The [International Society for Stem Cell Research](#) has prepared draft recommendations to move such research out of a category of "prohibited" scientific activities and into a class of research that can be permitted after ethics review and depending on national regulations.

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People familiar with ISSCR processes say there is not unanimous support for withdrawing the 14-day rule, with objections coming from bioethicists and some scientists. But they are in the minority: most agree that it needs to be eased.

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