

GROWING BABY CHICKS: WEEK 2

Inside the Egg

You look at an incubator full of eggs. It doesn't look like anything exciting is happening. However, these eggs have already been setting for a week. That means there are tiny baby chicks inside! Right now, they are **embryos**. They are tiny little baby chicks that will be ready to be born in a couple more weeks.

So, what happens during the second week of incubation? On day 8, the embryo still looks like a blob. However, the feathers are already forming. Little bumps grow on the skin. Then, slowly, feathers will appear. At first, they look more like hair than feathers. Then, tail feathers grow. By day 13, the tiny embryo is covered in feathers.

On day 10 of incubation, if you candle the egg, you can probably see a dark circle. This is the eye. It's really big compared to the rest of the chick. You might even see the baby chick moving inside the egg, too! You'll also notice that there is more air in the egg now than during the first week.

Another important development this week is the beak. The beak gets harder and harder. It also opens during this week. Beaks are made from **keratin**. That is really a type of skin. During this time, chicks also start growing an **egg tooth**. This is a special pointy tip on the beak. When hatching, chicks use this tooth to break the egg shell.

Also during this week, the toes and claws grow. At first, the toes look like little stubs on the chick's legs. Then, they grow longer into claws. However, a chick's claws don't get very hard until after they're born. That's why they need the egg tooth to help them break out of the shell. By day 12, scales form on the embryo's feet.



GROWING BABY CHICKS: WEEK 2

Inside the Egg (continued)



Up until this week, the embryo's heart wasn't inside the body. On day 7, the heart is finally in its spot. It beats and pumps blood around the tiny chick's body.



At the end of the second week of incubation, the embryo starts to look like a bird! It has wings, legs, and feathers. A lot of development has taken place. What began as a blob has turned into a tiny living thing. In just one more week, the chick will be ready to hatch.