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Scientists create living robots that can have babies – 2nd December, 2021

Level 0

A new robot can create baby robots. It's like science fiction. In 2020, scientists made the world's first "living" robot. It came from stem cells of an African frog. The new "xenobots" are less than one millimetre wide. They work in groups, and repair themselves. They don't look like robots. They are a machine-animal hybrid.

Researchers created a C-shaped robot. The inside of the "C" is the xenobot's mouth. It collects cells in its mouth and these become baby xenobots. This new technology could change our lives. They could repair our body and clean up plastic in the oceans. There are many benefits, but people are worried the robots can have babies.

Level 1

There is a new robot that can create baby robots. This is like science fiction. In 2020, scientists from universities in the USA made the world's first "living" robots. They came from the stem cells of an African frog and are called xenobots. They are less than one millimetre wide. They move and work in groups, and repair themselves. They don't look like robots. The scientists say they are a machine-animal hybrid. They are "a new life-form".

Researchers tested billions of body shapes to make a C-shaped robot. The inside of the "C" is the xenobot's mouth. It gathers small cells in its mouth and these become baby xenobots. This is new technology. It could change science, medicine, the environment and the way we live. They could repair damage to our body and clean up oil and plastic in the oceans. There are many benefits, but some people are worried about robots that can reproduce.

Level 2

Scientists say a new kind of robot can create baby robots. This is science fiction becoming science fact. The scientists are from universities in the USA. In 2020, they created the world's first "living" robots, called "xenobots". They came from the stem cells of an African frog. The xenobots are less than one millimetre wide. They can move, work together in groups and repair themselves. They are not what we imagine robots to be. The scientists say they are technically robots. They are a machine-animal hybrid. They are "an entirely new life-form".

The scientists said the bots reproduce because of their shape. Researchers tested billions of body shapes. The result was a C-shaped robot. The inside of the "C" became the xenobot's mouth. It gathered small cells in its mouth. These cells became a new, "baby" xenobot. The xenobots are very early technology. However, they could change science, medicine, the environment and the way we live. They could repair damage to our organs, attack micro-plastics in our oceans, and clean up oil spills. Despite the benefits, some people are worried about robots that can reproduce.

Level 3

Scientists say that a new kind of robot can reproduce - it can create baby robots. This is an example of science fiction becoming science fact. The scientists, from the Universities of Vermont, Tufts and Harvard, created the world's first "living" robots. They are called "xenobots". Scientists created them in 2020 from the stem cells of an African frog. Its scientific name - "xenopus laevis" - gave the xenobot its name. The xenobots are less than a millimetre wide. They can move, work together in groups and self-heal. Although they are not what we imagine robots to be, scientists say they are technically robots. They are a machine-animal hybrid. The scientists say xenobots are "an entirely new life-form".

The scientists explained that the bots reproduce because of their shape. Researchers used artificial intelligence (AI) to test billions of body shapes. The result was a C-shaped robot. It was able to find tiny stem cells in a petri dish. It gathered the cells in its mouth. A few days later, the cells became a new, "baby" xenobot. The xenobots are very early technology. However, they could change science, medicine, technology and the way we live. They could carry out tasks inside our body to repair damage to organs. They could also help the environment by attacking micro-plastics in our oceans, or by cleaning up oil spills. Despite the possible benefits, some people are worried about robots that can reproduce.