



All About the Placenta

The placenta is mysterious but mighty. The only transient organ in the body (meaning it grows, then leaves), belonging to both the birthing parent and the fetus, the placenta is a major part of our little corner of class mammalia. The organ grows in the uterus and hooks into the birthing parent's body to provide the fetus with oxygen, blood, and nutrients. Although scientists have plenty of questions about it—there's no way of studying it as it develops—what we do know proves how amazing the placenta is. Shaped like an umbrella over the baby, the placenta functions as multiple organs in one. It acts as the baby's lungs by providing oxygen from the birthing parent, as its kidneys by filtering out waste product, and as its gastrointestinal and immune system by delivering nutrients and antibodies. It keeps the birthing parent's blood supply separate from that of the fetus, while also helping pass nutrients from the former to the latter. The placenta is what allows the fetus to grow to a healthy size before birth.

You may have heard about the sudden popularity of Moms and Birthing parents eating their placentas after giving birth (celebrity practitioners include everyone from Kim Kardashian to January Jones). It's a practice known as placentophagia, and plenty of other mammals do it, though that doesn't mean it's helpful to homo sapiens. The women who choose to consume their placenta—raw, cooked, or in powdered capsules—claim it works as a preventative against postpartum depression or promotion of lactation, but a review of current studies found no evidence for any of the claims.

Humans and other higher primates (like apes and chimpanzees) start transferring their immunity to the fetus through the placenta, so that the babies are born with double the concentration of blood antibodies as their parents. This means the infants have up to six months of immune protection after birth. After that, they have to start generating their own new antibodies.

Here is how different cultures honor the placenta around the world:

Malaysia: Upon the birth of a child, it is necessary for the placenta and the umbilical cord to be buried properly in the doorway of the child's house. For this, both the placenta and the umbilical cord need to be cleansed as meticulously as possible. After that, it is placed in a piece of cloth together with several spices. These are inclusive of salt and tamarind together with onions and a whole lot more. Once that is done, it is also vital for needles, books and pencils to also be added into the piece of cloth. All of this is basically done in order to make sure that the child grows up to be a hardworking individual and a very intelligent student. After

Revolutionary Intentions

Intentional Captures
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adding in all of these items into the cloth, the placenta and umbilical cord are carefully wrapped and buried in the doorway of the house.

China: According to medical texts dating back to the ming dynasty, the placenta plays a very significant role in the survival as well as the development of a baby in the mother's womb. For this reason, it is packed full of nutrition and when take on a long-term basis, it has the potential to help one achieve longevity. Proponents of traditional Chinese medicine believe that eating the placenta is the finest means of celebrating birth and contains all of the nutrients required to keep postnatal depression at bay.

Hmong: It is believed by the Hmong people that the placenta plays a vital role in establishing a link between the living world and the spirit world. To them, an individual continues to maintain a deep connection with his/her placenta all through life for which reason it should not be discarded. The word used by the Hmong people for the placenta actually means 'jacket' and they believe that the soul of an individual actually goes back to the place where his/her placenta was buried in order to collect its 'placenta jacket'. It is only upon successfully doing so that the soul will be able to move on to the spirit world where it can meet its ancestors. also, it is only after collecting the placenta jacket and traveling to the spirit world that the soul will be reincarnated and sent back to the world as a new baby.

Maori: The Maori of New Zealand hold a strict belief that the adequate burial of the placenta on tribal land assists in the establishment of a lifelong connection between the new born baby and his/her ancestral land. To them, children will hence remain loyal to their ancestral lands and not move elsewhere. Through the burial, they believe that the Whenua is being gifted to Papa Tua Nuku or Mother Earth. On the whole, this particular ritual is based on the famous saying what is given by land should return to the land.

It is wise that you take all practices and evidence into account when deciding how to dispose of your placenta. Does your family have lost cultural traditions you can find out about? You may want to make a plan and have an encapsulator set up in advance - if so, ask for a referral.