

## The Placenta: A Powerful and Healing Organ



By: Diksha Berebitsky

In ancient times it was believed that the placenta nurtured not only the fetus's body but also their soul. The placenta was seen as the unborn twin who allowed the baby boy or girl a certain degree of comfort. It has been also called the bed of the child. These days many parents of different backgrounds want to respect and honor the child's placenta. As a symbol of gratitude many parents bury the placenta and plant a young tree over it. Families in the European tradition plant an apple tree for girls and a pear or nut tree for boys. In some traditions they bury the girl's placenta to the left of the front door and the boy's to the right. It is believed that as long as the placenta stays close to the surrounding area of the person it belonged to, no ill fate will befall them.

Throughout the world, generations have passed down the knowledge of how ingesting the placenta helps a mother's postpartum recovery. Today in Europe and America parents are rediscovering the healing powers of the placenta. The placenta has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) for more than 1400 years! Until the end of the 19th century even pharmacies in Europe sold placenta powder.

Scientists have discovered that the placenta contains hormones that inhibit stress and trigger the release of endorphins. The placenta aids in the recovery process from childbirth by restoring lost hormones and iron. This aids by augmenting lactation, preventing mood swings, and helping your child in this vital time of bonding and nurture. High levels of the prostaglandin hormone in the placenta help to stimulate the shrinking of the uterus to pre-pregnant size and to shorten bleeding time. The placenta also contains high levels of the hormone oxytocin, which eases birth stress and causes the smooth muscles around the mammary cells to contract and eject milk. A baby experiences love for its mother as a result of the oxytocin in her milk.

In TCM, the placenta is considered a powerful and sacred medicine full of life force "Qi". Raven Lang, a midwife who has studied TCM, advises women to use the placenta during the postpartum period to aid recovery from childbirth, prevent postpartum depression, and minimize bleeding. Many of the difficulties associated with the postpartum period, including nursing, would not arise if we returned to the old custom of applying placenta remedies.

Also, the newborn receives important hormones such as estrogen, progesterone and oxytocin the love hormone with the mother's milk. Mood swings resulting from a drop in the blood progesterone level respond well to treatment with placenta remedies. It has also been noticed that many people were able to feel true love towards their own mothers and themselves for the first time in their life after taking a placenta medicine. Humans need the hormone oxytocin to be able to feel love.

In TCM, cooking the placenta is an integral part of the formation and action of the medicine. Steaming is meant to enrich the placenta with energy. Drying the placenta is a method that is used all over the world. The placenta is prepared with respect, gratitude, and healing intentions. It is steamed with herbs, dehydrated, and then finely ground before encapsulation. The herbs help to dispense the placental medicine deep into your body. Taken with a little white wine the placental medicine will disperse even more deeply into your body's cells.

Encapsulation of the placenta powder is often preferred for taking the "ick factor" away. It allows the ingestion of a capsule in the same manner as taking any other supplement. and allows for taking the placental medicine over an extended period of time. You can also save some of your capsules for later, during emotionally and hormonally stressful times.

Women who have taken encapsulated placenta powder after birth, have reported that it made them feel stronger and happier, this helped them to deal with the sometimes overwhelming postpartum period.

Most placentas will make between 100-200 capsules, depending on the size of the placenta ( generally 7% of your baby's birth weight). Placenta capsules usually last for the immediate postpartum time, the first 40 days after giving birth.

To extent the benefits past the immediate postpartum time, some decide to form a mother tincture. Placenta medicine applied in form of a mother tincture is made with a small piece of raw placenta and 80% proof alcohol. It is beneficial for the mother after the immediate postpartum time and later in life. The benefits of the mother tincture include: increased energy, support during transitions, handling stressful situations, ease of PMS and strengthening of the immune system. The mother tincture is very beneficial for supporting a woman's hormonal state during menopause. The tincture provides the women with natural progesterone and estrogen, which helps prevent hot flashes, mood swings, palpitations, and provides hormonal balance.

Having a homeopathic remedy for your baby that is made from their placenta is the perfect constitutional remedy for your baby. It is like having a bit of a magic potion throughout your baby's life. This remedy is for use at times of illness, shock, transition or change and when you intuitively feel the need. Studies show that placental remedies provide benefits in the treatment of conditions where the child's immune system has failed to respond effectively to a challenge or illness. A remedy prepared from the child's own placenta provides an added individualized boost to overcome the child's own tendencies.

Ingesting your own placenta medicine easily provides you with hormonal support, increased energy, and nutritional supplementation. It speeds healing, increases milk supply, and can help to prevent postpartum depression. It is a perfect constitutional remedy throughout your baby's life. The benefits are simply amazing!

For further information on placenta medicine, history, and encapsulation the following reading material is recommended:

“Placenta: The Gift of Life” by Cornelia Enning and “The Natural Healing Power of the Placenta” by Jennifer L. West, LM, CPM.



“Diksha has been actively serving the birth community as a Certified & Holistic Doula (DONA International & The Matrona) since 2008. In addition, she is a triple certified Placenta Specialist, Certified Lactation & Breastfeeding and Childbirth Educator, as well as teacher of Infant Massage. With a background as a Reiki Master and 10 years as a massage therapist, she feels that she has discovered her true calling as a birth worker. Diksha is also the founder of the "Olympia Doula Circle" the "Meet the Doula Nights" and the "Olympia Cesarean and VBAC Support Group”.



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