

Placenta Consumption

What is placenta consumption?

Placenta [pluh-SEN-tuh] consumption [kun-SUMP-shun] is the practice eating the placenta after childbirth. It is either eaten raw or by swallowing capsules containing dried placenta tissue. Although the practice is rare, it is growing in popularity.

Why do people choose to consume (eat) the placenta?

Most people who choose to consume placenta tissue believe it provides certain physical and mental health benefits. These might include less postpartum depression, better mood, more energy, and more breastmilk. However, these claims are not supported by medical research.

What do I need to do next?

- 1 Review the information in this handout, especially what is known from medical research about the risks and benefits of placenta consumption.
- 2 Write down any questions you have for your healthcare provider on the back of this handout.
- 3 Discuss your questions with your healthcare provider and make a shared decision based on what is best for your situation.

Talking with your healthcare provider about placenta consumption

The table below lists information about the known benefits, risks, and alternatives of placenta consumption. The conversation you have with your healthcare provider is the most important part of learning about these risks and benefits. Be sure to ask questions. It's important to have all your questions answered before you decide to consume placenta tissue.

Possible benefits	Risks and possible complications	Alternatives
There are no known health benefits for people who consume placenta tissue.	Placentas may contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Germs that can either make you sick or transfer to your breastmilk and make your baby very sick. Germs can get on the placenta during a bowel movement (poop) or when the placenta is placed into a bag and container for you to transport home.• Harmful chemicals that can hurt you and your baby. The placenta filters certain chemicals from the environment to protect a developing baby. Harmful chemicals like cadmium, mercury, and lead have all been found in placenta tissue tested after childbirth. These chemicals can be harmful to you and your baby, even at low levels.	Follow standard medical treatments for health concerns related to your recovery, postpartum depression or other mood problems, fatigue (tiredness), or breastmilk supply.

How do I get the placenta after childbirth?

- 1 Tell your healthcare team.** If you choose to take the placenta home, your healthcare team will do what they can to help with your decision. **Note: You will not be allowed to take the placenta home if you have certain conditions like a COVID or HIV infection, or hepatitis. Also, the placenta cannot be given to the mother after a pathologic [path-uh-loj-ik] exam.** (During this type of exam, a medical specialist checks the placenta for certain diseases using chemicals that can be harmful to you. The placenta is not refrigerated during this exam, which also makes it unsafe to consume at a later time.)
- 2 Sign Intermountain Healthcare’s form, *Agreement for Release of Body Parts/Tissue/Remains and Exploited Medical Devices*.**
- 3 The placenta will be prepared for you to take home.** It will be placed in a biohazard bag inside of a white container. **After you receive the placenta, you will be responsible for keeping the placenta free from contamination (exposure to germs) and cold enough that germs or bacteria can’t grow on it. The placenta must be refrigerated as soon as possible.**

How is the placenta consumed?

The most common way to consume the placenta is to have it made into capsules and swallowed like a pill. It is prepared for this by steaming, dehydrating (drying), and then grinding the tissue into a fine powder. Often, women hire some type of placenta encapsulation [en-kap-suh-lay-shun] service to make the capsules. **Note: The dehydrating methods used to prepare placenta for capsules do not kill all the germs that can make you sick.**

Placentas may also be consumed raw, or after being cooked. **Consumption of a placenta or placenta products in any form are not permitted during your hospital stay.**

Questions for my provider

[illegible]

Where can I learn more?

For more information about placenta consumption, visit any of the following sites to learn more about recent medical research findings:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology
- Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing

