





A Literature Review on the Practice of Placentophagia

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Consuming the placenta after birth is not a common practice among humans. However, media attention to this practice in recent years may entice women to try placental consumption. A recent encounter with one such woman who wanted to ingest her placenta for perceived health benefits motivated us to look for evidence of such a practice. A literature search yielded considerable information on placentophagia, and this article is intended to raise awareness among nurses about the practice.

Abstract: Placentophagia (consuming the placenta) has historically not been a common practice among humans. Over the past few decades the practice has gained attention as more women, particularly educated, middle-class, White American women, choose to partake in this practice. Purported benefits of placentophagia include pain relief, increased breast milk production, and decreased risk of postpartum depression; however, there is a lack of evidence to support these claims. The placenta can be consumed raw, cooked, or encapsulated; it can be used for keepsakes; or it can be used to make topical applications such as dermatologic creams and hair-growth products. Placentophagia has typically been viewed as a personal choice, resulting in little rigorous scientific research on the topic. More research is necessary to determine if the purported health benefits of placentophagia are proven. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nwh.2016.08.005>

Keywords: eating the placenta | literature review | placenta | placenta encapsulation | placentophagia

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