

# Eating the placenta after childbirth—researchers explore perceptions of health benefits and risks

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Placentophagy—maternal consumption of the placenta—has become increasingly prevalent in the past decade among women seeking to promote health and healing during the postpartum period. But how much do clinicians or patients really know about the potential positive and negative health effects associated with this practice? A new study that assesses patient and physician attitudes toward placentophagy is published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

In the article "[Perspectives from Patients and Health Care Providers on the Practice of Maternal Placentophagy](#)," Stephanie Schuette and coauthors from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (Chicago, IL), Brigham and Women's Hospital (Chestnut Hill, MA), and University of Colorado School of Medicine (Denver, CO) report that most providers and patients are aware of placentophagy but are unsure of its benefits or risks. Women who reported having a history of a [mental health disorder](#) were more likely to consider trying placentophagy.

The proposed benefits of consuming the placenta may include hormonal balancing, pain moderation, nutritional advantages (such as iron supplementation), increased lactation, improved energy, and prevention of postpartum depression. The placenta can be consumed raw, cooked, or in an encapsulated form.

"The results were intriguing for the remarkable differences in perceptions based on multiple factors, such as provider types, income and education levels of patients, and geographic location," says *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* Editor-in-Chief John Weeks, [johnweeks-integrator.com](http://johnweeks-integrator.com), Seattle, WA.

First author Stephanie Schuette, Northwestern University Feinberg

School of Medicine, states: "As women are becoming increasingly aware of placentophagy, it is important for future research to examine the safety and efficacy of consuming placenta pills/tissue for postpartum benefits."

**More information:** Stephanie A. Schuette et al, Perspectives from Patients and Healthcare Providers on the Practice of Maternal Placentophagy, *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1089/acm.2016.0147](https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2016.0147)

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