

Medicinal Use of Placenta

AG Vincy Bala *

Many people of the world have known the secret power of the placenta as a medicinal supplement. The placenta is considered to be rich in nutrients that helps the mother to recover more readily from childbirth. Among the Chinese and Vietnamese, it is a customary practice to prepare the placenta for consumption by the mother.

Anatomical Features of Placenta

Human placenta is discoid. It is attached to the uterine wall and establishes connection between the mother and foetus through the umbilical cord.

Formation of placenta is completed and it becomes functional from 10 weeks after fertilisation. In its early stages it is a relatively loose structure, but becomes more compact as it matures. Between 12 and 20 weeks gestation the placenta weighs more than the foetus.

Functions of the mature placenta

- ◆ Placenta draws oxygen and excretes carbondioxide for the foetus.
- ◆ It breaks down complex nutrients into compounds which can be used by the foetus.
- ◆ Protein is transferred across the placenta as amino acids, carbohydrates as glucose and fat as fatty acids, it also transfers water, vitamins and minerals.
- ◆ It stores glucose in the form of glycogen and reconverts it to glucose when required.
- ◆ Towards the end of pregnancy, small antibodies immunoglobins G (IgG) will be transferred to the foetus and provide immunity to the baby for the first three months after birth.

Hormones of placenta

Placenta produces hormones such as human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG), oestrogens, progesterone and human placental lactogen.

Uses of Placenta

(i) Placentophagy is the practice of eating placenta

- ◆ Placenta contains vitamins and minerals that help to fight depression syndrome.
- ◆ It is considered rich in iron and protein which would be useful to women recovering from childbirth and a particular benefit to vegetarian mother.
- ◆ It helps in lactation.



- ◆ It expedites the completion of labour.
- ◆ Mothers undergoing delivery take bites of raw placenta to stop haemorrhaging due to its beneficial oxytocin content.
- ◆ The placenta contains high levels of prostaglandin which stimulates involution (an inward curvature or penetration, or, a shrinking or return to a former size) of the uterus, in effect cleaning the uterus out. The placenta also contains small amounts of oxytocin which eases birth stress and causes the smooth muscles around the mammary cells to contract and eject milk.

(ii) Placenta pill

- ◆ Placenta pills are used to increase energy and these allow quicker return to health after birth.
- ◆ Increase production of breast milk.
- ◆ Decrease postnatal depression and sleep disorders.
- ◆ Decrease iron deficiency.



Placenta pills should be avoided in following condition

- People with the presence of pathogenic factors.
- Common cold.
- Mastitis.

(iii) Placental cosmetics

Placental cosmetics were first invented as an injection by Dr Paul Niehans in early 1930's.

It is an anti-ageing product that stimulates cell renewal functions in the body and tissue growth and induces the body's production of new cells and slows down the ageing process. It is used as a ingredient in cosmetic creams and other skin care products. Placenta-based cream scrubs help to clear pores and stimulate blood circulation which help to prevent cellulites.



Conclusion

Placenta is rich in hormones and with medicinal effect to heal the wound (burns). Consumption of placenta reduces postpartum depression and acts as an anti-ageing product. So placenta is not something to be wasted, rather to be used with benefit.

References

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*MSc (N) II Year, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, at the time of writing this article.