



Why I won't be eating my placenta

When I gave birth to my first child, nobody asked what I planned to do with the placenta. If they had, I would have answered, “Why, do you want it for something?” It wouldn't have occurred to me that someone might sauté her afterbirth with lemon and ginger, blend it into a smoothie or make a blood-on-paper print of it for posterity. I'd heard of people in faraway places burying the placenta under a tree but chalked that up to a lack of fertilizer alternatives. Call me a slave to aseptic Western thought, but I believe that after working hard for nine months, a placenta's place is in a disposal receptacle, congratulating itself on a job well done.

Two years and another pregnancy later, I find myself in the minority. At least according to the highly scientific sample from my mommy-and-me group in Seattle.

“I've been taking placenta pills,” a mom who recently delivered her second baby offered as the explanation for why she's looking really good.

My mind struggled to make sense of this. *Pills . . . to . . . assist the placenta?* But she no longer has one. She must mean pills made *from* the placenta.

“How exactly does that work?” I asked.

“They dehydrate it, grind it up and put it into capsules,” she explained.

“It's standard practice in traditional Chinese medicine,” said a woman who is not herself Chinese. “To get your chi back.”

“You know, your life force,” clarified someone else. “Your energy. Plus, I've heard it can help boost your milk supply.”

“We're the only mammal that doesn't eat their placenta,” another said. “So you have to wonder.”

I *was* wondering. I was wondering how I was the odd one out because *I did not want to eat my placenta*. In most of the country, I come across as a bohemian hippie, with my pierced nose, fondness for handmade arm-warmers and refusal to wash my hair more than twice a week. But by Seattle standards, I'm pretty mainstream. I use prescription-strength deodorant, always wear a bra, and despite the enthusiasm for the practice the women in my mommy-and-me group expressed, I still have zero interest in consuming my afterbirth. I plan to deliver my baby just like I did the last one—without a gallon-sized Ziploc in hand to cart my placenta home with me. And the only things we'll be sticking in our blender are limeade, tequila, triple sec and ice. You know, to celebrate the placenta. *

Wilson Diehl lives in Seattle.

