

Have you heard conflicting information about the benefits of placenta encapsulation? Some people say that it's safe, some people say that it's not, others say it made them feel amazing after they gave birth and others are skeptical of these claims and may even find the whole idea of consuming their placenta to be a little gross.

So, what's the truth? *The truth is that all of these things can be true!*

### **Is the Process Safe?**

Placenta encapsulation can be safe – when it is done properly and safety concerns should always be the top priority when choosing who to process your placenta. There are guidelines that must be followed during storage and during the drying process. Furthermore, the placenta (and everything that touches it!) must be handled in such a way to avoid contamination and the spread of illness. Encapsulators should carry a Blood Borne Pathogen certification as well as certification in placenta preparation.

We know that three main things are important when it comes to safety:

- Placentas must be stored at safe temperatures until the processing starts.
- Placentas must be heated to the proper temperature during processing.
- All items used to process multiple placentas must be sanitized with [bleach](#) and other EPA registered disinfectants. (**Essential oils do not meet this requirement.**) Disposable items should be used when possible.

When the above guidelines are met, the process of placenta encapsulation is very safe – not unlike ordering a steak at a local restaurant. In fact, the safety guidelines of handling meat in a restaurant are very similar to those of handling placentas. In our placenta company, we actually carry food handlers' licenses for this reason.

The one time we know that placenta encapsulation is NOT safe is when there is an infection present in the mother or baby at the time of delivery. While most of these infections will be treated with antibiotics and both parties will be just fine, it does mean that the placenta is no longer safe for consumption. (If you use my placenta services, I will always refund in the case of an infection and/or offer to do a print and cord keepsake.)

### **It's a little Gross Though, Right?**

Beauty is always in the eye of the beholder so some people will consider placenta consumption to be less than palatable, however by the time the placenta arrives to your home it looks nothing like it did when it started the journey from your place of birth. Your placenta now looks like a pill that is about the size of a Tylenol. We offer clear and purple berry pills. The clear pills are vegetarian and do show a bit of the dried placenta inside but the purple berry flavored pills show nothing. Taking this pill really is like swallowing your daily multi-vitamin.

## **Why Choose Placenta Encapsulation?**

In my practice, I get calls every day from women who tell me how well their postpartum recovery is going and many compare it to previous births where they did not take placenta pills. While we chat, I can almost hear these ladies glowing over the phone and I love hearing those stories.

Women choose placenta encapsulation for many reasons, but the most common reasons are usually that they want to encourage a stronger milk supply, balance their mood, and increase energy. So basically, the things most postpartum moms want – they want to feel better, avoid postpartum mood disorders, and take care of their baby in the best ways possible.

Can placenta pills really accomplish these lofty goals? We have lots of anecdotal evidence showing all of these things but the research itself is mostly silent. We know placenta is rich in various hormones and iron but the double-blind studies have not happened, so listening to the wisdom of women who have tried placenta encapsulation is the best information we have and quite frankly, their reviews are pretty good.

## **What About A Tincture?**

Many women also choose to consume their placenta using a tincture. A placenta tincture contains a thumb-sized portion of your placenta that is soaked in a high-quality vodka for six weeks. The tincture preserves the contents of the placenta almost indefinitely, and can be used in times of hormonal imbalance such as the return of your menstrual cycle (or possibly even menopause). Your capsules are best used within the first six to eight weeks after your baby's birth, so a tincture extends the benefits from your placenta for a longer period of time.

## **Is Placenta Encapsulation Right For Me?**

I do also know that placenta encapsulation is not for everyone. You and your midwife should chat about the benefits based on your health and postpartum recovery plans. Having a healthy postpartum can look different for every family. If you are not sure, it is always an option to put your placenta in the freezer (double bag in ziplocks and stick in the very back of the freezer) and wait a few days. While we do recommend having your pills at the ready when you need them, this option allows you to quickly make arrangements to have your placenta processed if you are not sure during your pregnancy.

**Maria Pokluda is the owner of Great Expectations Birth. She has is a certified doula and placenta encapsulator and has processed over a thousand placentas. She loves helping families have happy birth days and happy postpartums. If you have questions about placenta encapsulation or postpartum, please reach out to her at [www.greatexpectationsbirth.com](http://www.greatexpectationsbirth.com)**