

Appendix 4 – Information for Women: Lotus Birth

A Lotus birth, also known as “Umbilical Nonseverance”, is when the placenta remains attached to the baby until the cord naturally detaches usually 3 to 10 days after birth. A Lotus Birth is rarely seen in the hospital setting and, although occurrence is very uncommon, is more likely to be seen in the home or free birth setting. It is important for some people who have specific spiritual and cultural beliefs that the umbilical cord and placenta remain intact.

The usual practice following birth is to place your baby ‘skin-to-skin’ as soon as possible, whilst the placenta is delivered. Once the blood flow between the placenta and your baby has ceased, and no pulse is felt in the cord, your midwife or doctor would normally assist you to clamp and cut the cord. Unlike the recognised benefits of delayed cord clamping for babies in the limited research available for Lotus Birth there is no medical benefit for the baby to remain attached to the placenta after the cord has stopped pulsating.

If you are planning to have a Lotus Birth please discuss with your midwife when discussing your birth preferences. When you decide to have a lotus birth please understand that it will be the responsibility of the mother to monitor the placenta/cord as whilst your midwife is supporting your choice they cannot take responsibility.

It is recommended that any baby that undergoes lotus birthing be monitored closely for infection) as there are known risks, including infection, for the baby.

Following your baby’s Birth

- Once the placenta is birthed the midwife will examine the placenta and membranes for completion.
- Any excess fluids should be wiped off from the placenta and cord, if necessary, wash it clean, and carefully pat it dry.
- The placenta is then usually wrapped in a cloth (provided by the woman) but when at home this may be placed in a covered bowl.
- Keep the placenta near your baby and lift or hold the baby carefully with clean, thoroughly washed hands to reduce the chances of the cord being tugged, which could potentially cause the cord to be pulled out before it’s ready to fall off.
- Dress your baby in loose, comfortable clothing that opens in the front too. It is important that the air is able to pass through the cloth or the bowl to allow the placenta to dry out to aid separation, thus preventing a distinctive musky odour.
- Do not attempt to remove the umbilical cord. It should fall off naturally within three to 10 days after birth, but in some cases it could take up to 15 days. If you change your mind and decide that you want to remove the umbilical cord before it’s ready to fall off, please contact the community midwife for advice.
- Some women may speed up this process by adding sea salt or essential oils however they haven’t been proved to reduce the risk of infection.

You will need to pay attention, for signs of a possible infection in the baby. Seek immediate medical care for:

- A pus or fluid-filled lump near the umbilical cord area.
- Red, warm or swollen skin near the umbilical cord area.

- Cloudy, foul-smelling discharge or blood coming from the umbilical cord or navel area.
- If you have a thermometer at home and your baby has a raised, low or fluctuating temperature (temperature should be between 36.6 and 37.4 degree celcius)
- If your baby is limp, increasingly Irritability, lethargy, increasingly sleepy or difficult to rouse, decreased activity
- Has abnormal or rapid breathing
- Your baby is not feeding well
- You are concerned

Additional considerations when planning a Lotus Birth

If you have requested a lotus birth, please be mindful that if an emergency presents (such as haemorrhage or your baby needs resuscitation), your care providers will ask for your consent to clamp and cut the umbilical cord in order to initiate emergency care for you and/or your newborn.

The care and disposal of the placenta remains remain your responsibility. Your midwife will be able to provide you with and information leaflet called "*Information for Women: Guidance on the storage and disposal (by burial) of placenta*".

We will ask you to complete the "*Release of human tissue (placenta and umbilical cord only)*" form.