



HUTT maternity

Hutt Valley Maternity Care

Care of the Placenta

Information for women

The placenta/whenua is an amazing organ that sustains babies while inside their mother's womb.

Once baby is born sometimes your midwife or doctor might recommend that the placenta/whenua is sent to the laboratory for a variety of reasons that they will explain. They will get permission from you to proceed with any tests that they think are important.

If you consent for the placenta/whenua to be sent to the laboratory you may wish for it to be disposed of by the laboratory or you may wish to have it returned. If you wish to have your placenta/whenua returned please tell your midwife so she can get you to sign the laboratory form.

When the placenta/whenua is returned after testing at the laboratory please note that it would have been 'fixed' in a chemical called formalin so that the structure of the tissue can be clearly seen under the microscope. Formalin is a toxic substance.

Your midwife or doctor will tell you the results of the placenta/whenua testing.

Return of the placenta/whenua

Burying the placenta/whenua that has been fixed in formalin has a very low risk to the environment as the formalin breaks down quickly in soil.

If you are wishing to bury your placenta/whenua after it has been fixed in formalin it is important that it is buried deep enough that it can't be dug up by an animal. If the placenta/whenua is eaten by an animal they may become unwell. Likewise consumption of the placenta/whenua once treated in formalin would cause poisoning to humans.

However, if you want to plant a tree above the placenta/whenua it is unlikely that the tree will uptake any chemical so therefore eating fruit from the tree would have minimal risk to health.

