

Burying your whenua

When you are ready the whenua can be removed from the plastic wrapping and buried at home or at the home of a family member. For burials on public land or at Marae you will need to seek permission first.

Some people mark the burial spot with a native tree, bush or plant.

More Information

If you would like more information talk to:

- Your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC)
- Your kaumatua or elders in your family or community
- Te Whatu Ora - Waitematā Maori health services
- Te Whatu Ora - Waitematā Pacific Island pregnancy support

Te Whatu Ora
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Your baby's whenua (placenta)



Your whenua

The whenua forms at the beginning of pregnancy and enables oxygen and nutrients to pass from you to your baby.

Most cultures have special beliefs and practices surrounding the whenua.

In Maori culture the whenua has a spiritual and physical connection to whakapapa (the genealogy, family tree and the land). It is quite common for new mothers and families/whānau to want to keep their whenua after the birth.



After the birth of your baby

Once your baby is born, your midwife or doctor can let the cord pulsate so that any blood in the whenua can pass to your baby, before the cord is cut. Then the whenua separates from your uterus and your contractions expel it from your body.

For some women an injection of oxytocin (a hormone) may be recommended to help contract your uterus, expel your placenta, and slightly reduce the bleeding you may have.

Your LMC will discuss this with you.

Examination of the whenua

The whenua and cord are examined by your midwife to check they are healthy and complete.

In some situations; if your baby was very small, premature or sick, you will be asked to consent to the whenua being examined by a pathologist in a laboratory.

You can request that your whenua is returned to you after this examination; if you do not want it returned it will be disposed of.

Taking the whenua home

If you would like to take your whenua home but are not leaving the hospital the same day, ask someone in your family, your partner or support person to take it for you.

You may bring an ipu whenua (special pot or woven container) to receive the whenua as it is born, if not your whenua will be placed in a container.

When you take your whenua home leave it in its packaging. Keep it away from animals and young children.

It is unwise to store the whenua in a fridge where food is kept for cultural and hygiene reasons. If you need to keep it for any period of time before burial you can temporarily bury it in a large plant pot.

If you do not take the whenua home the hospital will dispose of it shortly after the birth.

Make sure you tell your LMC about plans for your whenua.