

Lotus Birth: An Impact on Newborn Health

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Abstract

The term “Lotus Birth” is the practice of not detaching the umbilical cord and of leaving the placenta attached to the newborn after its expulsion until it naturally falls off. It is also considered to be a religious ritual that soothes the baby. Lotus birth and delayed cord clamping are contradictory to each other. Delayed cord clamping is where the midwife cuts the umbilical cord after the pulsation stops whereas in lotus birth the cord is left by not cutting and leaving with the baby until it falls off. The reasons the mothers choose the lotus birth are that it favors less stress to a newborn, serves as immunity, creates a soldering attachment towards the mother and her baby, enhances nourishment from the placenta, and is a religious custom to honor the mutual life between baby and placenta.

Keywords: Lotus birth; Impact; Newborn; Placenta and Umbilical cord.

INTRODUCTION

Lotus birth is an alternative childbirth technique where the umbilical cord remains uncut, and the newborn stays connected to the placenta. The natural separation usually occurs three to 10 days after birth.¹ The mothers prefer to have a lotus birth approach because of their sacred beliefs. They believe that the placenta and the umbilical cord are the parts of the baby's body and not medical waste material. When incorporating lotus birth during the third stage of labor, it is treated

passively with no use of either oxytocic drugs or controlled cord traction. Therefore, the baby has the control of letting go of the placenta.² The placenta will be preserved for a minimum of two days up to a maximum of two weeks, during which it will be treated with sea salt, ginger, and essential oils for its preservation and, moreover to reduce the unpleasant odor that a decomposing human organ will unavoidably produce.³ Fig. 1 portrays the baby with a placenta in lotus birth.



Fig. 1: Newborn with Placenta in lotus birth

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HISTORY OF LOTUS BIRTH

The unearthly significance of the lotus flower is Renaissance and revitalization, as the daily activities of the lotus are connected to the resurrection of life. In Eastern cultures, the lotus is considered for adoration. It is a sacred symbol because it depicts the ways of life, especially; the lotus is called the "Flower of Life" due to its association with purity, rebirth, strength, spiritual enlightenment, beauty, fertility, prosperity, and infinity.⁴ The idea of lotus birth came forth in 1974 in the U.S. and Australia, according to the book written by Dr. Sarah Buckley "Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering: The Wisdom and Science of gentle choices in Pregnancy, birth and Parenting" published on the website Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond.⁵ The activity of lotus birth was instigated by a woman Clair Lotus Day in 1974. She ascertained that a chimpanzee retained her baby's placenta until it dried up and detached naturally. After that, she adopted this method in humans, presuming it could improve bonding and attachment post-birth.⁶ Subsequently, lotus birth was outspread by midwife and yoga practitioner Jeannine Parvati Baker in the United States, and by Shivam Rachana, founder of the International College of Spiritual Midwifery, and Dr. Sarah Buckley in Australia. This practice has also been observed in many countries, including the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Turkey.⁷

Difference between Delayed Cord Clamping and Lotus Birth

Delayed cord clamping is in contrary with lotus birthing. Delayed cord clamping (DCC) is a universally advisable practice in which the umbilical cord is not severed until it stops pulsating. The World Health Organization (WHO) confides the wait time up to three minutes before clinching the umbilical cord.⁸ On the other hand, in lotus birth, the umbilical cord is left still where the mother delivers the placenta naturally, without Pitocin. The natural separation happens between three to 10 days.⁹

PROCESS OF LOTUS BIRTH

The guidelines of preliminary & post measures of lotus birth are illustrated in fig. 2. The process of lotus birth is carried out in the following manner,

- ✓ The appropriate gestational age baby as soon as delivered is kept on the mother's chest, and the placenta is allowed to deliver naturally without using oxytocic medicines.
- ✓ The umbilical cord is not clamped, so the veins naturally constrict, by which blood circulation stops in the placenta within five minutes.
- ✓ The placenta is then washed, salted, and covered in an absorbent soft cloth. At last, a mixture of herbs is used to dry the placenta and to prevent foul odor and infection.
- ✓ The placenta is then held up in an airy bag until the umbilical cord winds up from the baby.¹⁰
- ✓ Lotus birth cannot be practiced if the baby is born premature or needs NICU admission. In such cases, the neonatologist would prefer to keep the environment around the baby sterile. Hence, it is desirable to cut the umbilical cord.¹¹

The following articles support the lotus birth in the current trends. *Kyejo W, Davis R, Mwalu C, Moshi L, (2022)* conducted a similar study on the Lotus birth case series which recorded two women who opted to deliver without detachment of placenta. It revealed that lotus delivery poses a challenge in safety, but despite its rarity, an encounter is indispensable. With WHO advocating shared decisions for delivery, a clear pathway for attending such cases is of paramount importance as far as safety for the mother and her newborn is considered. Lotus birth is a new way of delivery despite the low prevalence; it is indispensable for all cadres that deal with delivering mothers to be aware of better outcomes.¹² Another qualitative study was conducted on the experience of lotus birth by nine women who experienced lotus birth in Turkey. The results revealed that the themes extracted were reflective of the desire for a natural and healthy birth that is experienced as positive and beneficial. It also contributed to a deeper and more subtle understanding of lotus birth providing all women and health care providers, especially maternity nurses, with valuable information and increased awareness of lotus birth.²

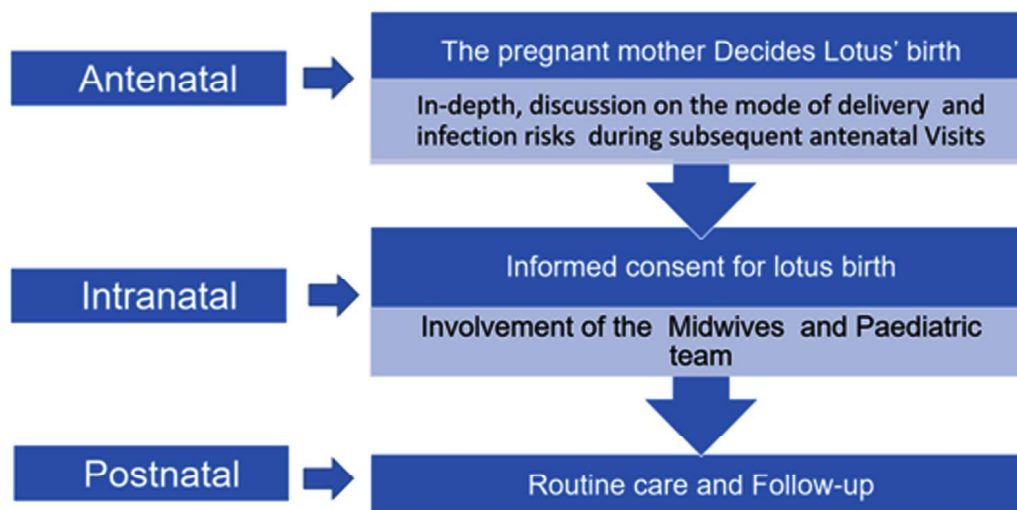


Fig. 2: The Guidelines on before and after lotus birth

Care of the Placenta

The Mothers should keep in mind the following points while the placenta is still attached to baby.

- ✓ Dress baby in open clothes that don't affect the umbilical cord or fit too snugly.
- ✓ Make sure that the placenta is near the baby at all times so that it doesn't pull or cause tension.
- ✓ When feeding, holding and touching baby she should remember to look out for the umbilical cord.
- ✓ If she decides to remove the umbilical cord before it's ready to fall off, call the pediatrician for safe removal.¹¹

Follow-up Care

The mothers should be watchful in taking medical advice if the baby has:

- ✓ Redness, warmth, swelling at or around the umbilical area.
- ✓ Temperature greater than 100.4°F.
- ✓ Pus or fluid filled lump near the umbilical cord area.
- ✓ Cloudy, foul smelling discharge or blood coming from the umbilical cord or navel area.
- ✓ Irritability, lethargy, trouble feeding, or decreased activity.
- ✓ Irregular feeding (less than 8-12 feedings with three stools) within the first three days after birth.
- ✓ Irregular sleeping patterns or difficulty in waking the baby.

- ✓ Any damage to the placenta.¹³

Benefits & Minor risk of Lotus Birth

Lotus birth claims the practice to have the following benefits:

- ✓ A gentle, less invasive transition for the baby from womb to the world.
- ✓ Increased blood and nourishment from the placenta thereby reduces the risk of anemia.
- ✓ Decreased injury to the belly button.
- ✓ A spiritual ritual to honor the shared life between baby and placenta.
- ✓ Prioritize natural and non-interventional approach.
- ✓ Helps in better mother child bonding.
- ✓ Mothers and babies can have a better breastfeeding experience.¹⁴

The lotus birth is associated with minor risks such as:

- ✓ Daily placenta cleaning and maintenance.
- ✓ Low mobility for the mother and the baby.
- ✓ Injury to the navel.
- ✓ Infection as the umbilical cord and the placenta essentially become dead tissue after childbirth. But the benefits outweigh the risk towards carrying out lotus birth.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

A Lotus Birth is keeping the placenta inherent

and attached to the baby for the first few days of the baby's life. While this is not widely practiced, it's vital for birthing people to know that it exists as an option, as well as for health care providers to be able to know that families may choose to have a lotus birth, and to discuss the risks and benefits of lotus birth, provide an informed consent, answer questions and facilitate this practice. It is the period for babies to be born in integrity. It's time to practice the parturition that supports the naive radiance of babies and protects their inborn identity. Lotus Birth is a choice, a natural endowment from parents who recognize its significance.

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