

Fourth Trimester Podcast

Episode 5: Spring Childers Placenta

Sarah Trott: [00:00:05] My name is Sarah Trott. I'm a new mama to a baby girl and this podcast is all about postpartum care for the few months following birth, the time period also known as the Fourth Trimester. My postpartum doula, Esther Gallagher, is my co-host. She's a mother, grandmother, perinatal educator, birth and postpartum care provider. I've benefitted hugely from her support. All parents can benefit from the wisdom and support that a postpartum Doula provides. Fourth trimester care is about the practical, emotional and social support parents and baby require, and importantly, helps set the tone for the lifelong journey of parenting.

When I first became pregnant, I had never heard of postpartum Doulas, let alone knew what they did. So much of the training and preparation that expecting parents do is focused on the birth and newborn care. Once baby is born, often the first interaction parents have with medical or child professionals, other than the first pediatrician visits, is the six-week checkup with the OB/GYN. *What about caring for mama and family between the birth and the six week doctor visit? What are the strategies for taking care of the partner and the rest of the family while looking after your newborn?*

Our podcasts contain expert interviews with specialists from many fields to cover topics including postpartum doula practices, prenatal care, prenatal and postnatal yoga, parenting, breastfeeding, physical recovery from birth, nutrition, newborn care, midwifery, negotiating family visitation, and many more.

First-hand experience is shared through lots of stories from both new and seasoned parents. Hear what other parents are asking and what they have done in their own lives.

We reference other podcasts, internet resources and real-life experts who can help you on your own parenting journey. Visit us at <http://fourthtrimesterpodcast.com>

Sarah Trott: [00:00:45] Hi welcome back to the fourth trimester podcast. We have a very fascinating topic today. I'm really thrilled to be here talking about it. The topic is placenta consumption which oddly enough is something that's not as commonly

practiced as other birth traditions possibly because of the ew factor or just a lack of information about it and what it is. So I have to say that I am surprised myself going from one camp to the other having very little information about use of the placenta other than you know its practical function in the gestation process. But one thing that I did come across in the media which a lot of people probably either heard about or saw if they're in any way a fan of reality television would be that Courtney Kardashian famously ate her own placenta in pill form and tweeted about it and took a picture of her placenta pills and I think a lot of people were sort of intrigued and shocked but fascinated with that. And I would hope that the fascination would lead to a lot more inquiries into like what exactly that is and why she did that. So I am really pleased to say that I am here joined today by Spring Childers who is a certified doula, a massage therapist. anyone who's interested in finding out more about her can go to her own site which is the birth doula dot com and I know Spring because we work together. She is nurturing and knowledgeable and she is here to help us demystify a little bit about the placenta. So hello. Hello. Thank you for being here.

Spring Childers: [00:02:20] Thank you for having me, Sarah.

Sarah Trott: [00:02:22] Can I ask her really basic question to kick us off which is what is the placenta?

Spring Childers: [00:02:27] So let's just be simple and say the placenta is an amazing organ that is made from the embryo and implanted into the bed of the uterus into the endometrium lining and starts forming around day 8 and continues forming until about the 12th week when it has its full form and it's a fully functioning organ that then sustains the pregnancy and nurtures it, brings nutrients to the fetus and hormones to the mama to help her to sustain the pregnancy. So a couple functions with the placenta just physiologically is it has a few functions: the organ of metabolism, the organ of transfer and an endocrine organ. So it synthesizes the production and the secretion of these hormones that are needed for sustaining pregnancy and the placenta provides the fetus with oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange, the passage of nutrients and the excretion of the waste. So it also can transfer the maternal antibodies and the hormones to maintain the pregnancy.

Sarah Trott: [00:03:48] So one thing that I thought was really interesting that you had mentioned to me is just the fact that not all placentas are the same. I think you'd mentioned twins. What happens in a twin scenario?

Spring Childers: [00:03:59] So there are two different types of twin placental growth. they could be fused together depending on how the twins are made and therefore we want to be a little bit more vigilant at that birth and these days you probably they would probably look at that being a cesarean birth and here in the United States or in industrialized countries just because if one baby is born and some of the placenta starts to come off then they are connected and that can lead to mom hemorrhaging and the second baby not getting the nutrients it needs to get born. So that can be a little bit of a complicated situation. What I have seen and which has been very exciting is to have two separate placentas and they have implanted in two separate sites and the babies are in two separate sacks and so that was very exciting because then I was able to witness and I also have helped process these placentas and keeping them separate and honoring that they are each placentas for two different individual people and they were about the same size a little bit smaller than your average placenta. And you know they each have their own pattern. And they have you know their own life. So to speak. Yeah.

Sarah Trott: [00:05:25] And is there ever a case where it's two babies in one or is that that's what you mean by fused?

Spring Childers: [00:05:29] I mean if you have two babies and the placentas would be fused. It could also be two babies in the two sacks where the placenta is just implanted next to each other. And so then they kind of fuse together a little bit. But in case where they would be fused would be when they haven't separated all the way because they came from the same egg.

Sarah Trott: [00:05:52] Makes sense. So just kind of thinking a little more broadly about the concept of the placenta. There are very few things in life that are temporary in the way that it is. So for example the state of being engaged to someone to be married you know is this period that just comes along once in the relationship. You know you're with someone and then you're engaged in this really special period of time before something big happens and then you know you're in this lifelong commitment and in a funny sort of

way that reminds me of the placenta's life. It grows to perform a specific purpose to prepare something and it's there for a defined period of time and then it's done and it's such an awe inspiring function of the body creating a baby and creating this new life. But the placenta is the enabler of that in a lot of ways because it's giving that baby what it needs to grow. And I think that's really special and people don't really talk about their placenta much.

Spring Childers: [00:06:51] And so in that way with so many things come to mind because you know through the years I've really read a lot about placentas and the traditions of placentas and the history of placentas in all the different cultures around world. And one thing that we can all recognize and we all know because we all lived in the amniotic sack with the placenta for you know up to nine months and on that placenta there is a beautiful pattern of veins that run. And if you look closely they can resemble a tree and the placenta is regarded around the world as the Tree of Life. Let's say so the tree is the symbol of kind of the cycle of life in that we have roots that go into the ground and the earth is that place where all things decay and come back to life this kind of recycling happens there. And so these roots are connected to that earth and that life giving force. And then there is the trunk and inside the womb inside the amniotic sac we have the placenta we have the veins that look like the tree tops and we have the cord that connects the mom and the baby and this cord brings that life just like the trunk in the tree brings the life from the roots placenta up through the cord or through the trunk and into this baby just as the tree brings out the life from the earth through the roots to the trunk up into the branches into the leaves bringing fruit and we all know how that cycle works. That trees have the blossoms, the fruiting, the leaves. They decay and die and fall off and we go in, it goes into that quiet time to rejuvenate again. So that placenta symbolizes that cycle. And once we are born and this placenta comes along with us we then have this great nutritional and just amazing strong Lifeforce. And once again I'm speaking about science and traditions but also the physiological makeup of a placenta and how it works in that once it's born, it's here and it's full of life. And it's not over yet. There is a continuation process just like when you're engaged and you get married. It leads into something else. It's not over yet. And so there are so many ways we can honor that life force.

Sarah Trott: [00:09:30] When my baby grew and her little belly button stub started to fall off, I remember thinking oh no it's almost falling off. I think there was so much joy I

had in her growing and developing and also such a feeling of sadness and loss that my really tiny newborn baby girl who is growing so fast in this period is going by in a flash that she's going to be less connected to me somehow because that physical symbol of my connection to her was about to fall off and go away which is for the best. But I did definitely shed a tear more than a tear when bath time when I looked down and it was gone and I thought OK that was the end of something and I feel connected to her spiritually and in my heart and so many ways. But that was a special feeling for me that I had when I saw that there was something physical there that was part of the two of us together that was really special.

Spring Childers: [00:10:24] That's one of the properties of the placenta and the umbilical cord and that is something that is honored in traditions all around the world. And it's something for all of us to remember: that we were connected to our mothers, our first beginnings of life and it all started with that connection with the placenta implanting and the cord growing out. And in that constant exchange and it's just like the you know deciduous trees, how the leaves can fall off and then have anew. And when that fell off I'm sure something new happened in her development and her physiology as she was healing and growing and becoming a bigger human.

Sarah Trott: [00:11:03] Ah yes. I suppose I have two questions one is how do we prepare for having a good healthy placenta in terms of foods and practices and things like that while we're pregnant? Actually start there.

[00:11:17] I'm really glad that you asked that because I see quite a few placentas, I've seen quite a few placentas. And no matter what I can tell you that placentas will find whatever they need to bring that Baby It's nourishment. And so if you're not eating the healthiest thing or some other things I recommend It's ok. Your placenta is an amazing organ and that knows exactly what to do. And its job is to grow and nurture your baby and sustain your pregnancy and it will do that to the best of its ability. And I have seen placentas that I'm sure everyone's heard about the placenta gives out or you know it grows old and so that's why we need to get that baby out and get labor going at the due time. And you know I've seen placentas go very far overdue weeks and that's what was called calcification or just some hard particulate, the placenta starts to degrade into and kind of close down. There are some hard particulate. But in all of those placentas where that might start happening there is always an open functioning space. And so even

sometimes I've seen placentas where there might be extra lobe, we call it, with extra codyledons and these are that the codyledons are well connected to the mom's uterus and through the villi bring the nutrition to and from the placenta and that baby. So no matter what you eat you're going to give your body this good nutrition your placenta is going to be OK. However I have seen where women who do not assimilate or process their sugars as well maybe being diagnosed with gestational diabetes, maybe not. But when I come back and ask what were you eating, maybe they were eating a higher not necessarily straight sugar but high carbohydrate and a little bit less protein a little bit of an imbalance in their food. I have seen those to be a little bit more calcified. I've seen vegans with gorgeous placentas. So and now these are vegans that are very conscious about getting a nice high protein, blood building diet and so for in general what you want to look out for your nutrition is the same as any kind of pregnancy nutrition but know that when you're thinking about it's not just about nourishing your baby but it is about nourishing your placenta because that is how baby gets its nutrients. And so any kind of blood building foods or even infused teas; so herbal teas, there's great nettle and raspberry leaf and you can mix a little peppermint in if you want for flavor and oatstraw and alfalfa, these can be really good blood building and it's something you can drink as opposed to sometimes you know all those foods can get a little overwhelming. You know organ meats are really great funny thing that an organ meat would nurture an organ. So I always recommend you know very clean organic no hormones livers and organ meats from either cows or chickens or beef pork whatever. Those can be some of the best blood building and you can just mix those things in with other meats. They don't have to be as off putting. Sometimes those flavors can be strong if you're not accustomed to it.

Sarah Trott: [00:14:44] I've certainly seen recipes for things like bolognese sauces that have chicken liver in them.

Spring Childers: [00:14:48] Exactly. And you can mix that. And so that's another good. Next level is the bolognese: It's tomato and vitamin C and so Vitamin C is another thing that helps us absorb that iron and helps us with that blood building and there's always amazing fruits that are high in vitamin C or in this case a good tomato sauce that goes through all the seasons. So I've worked with moms who said Oh I ate a whole bowl of these fresh oranges and I just couldn't stop eating them. And you know why when her baby came out she had the strongest membranes. Those, the amniotic sac was so

strong. And that comes from eating a nice high bio flavonoid diet in which, in that case too, I do recommend. You're nurturing the placenta as well as the amniotic sac. And we want those membranes to be nice and strong because you want your baby to stay encased in that sac as long as possible and that is one of the commonalities of malnutrition is that the membranes break a little bit early and mommas go into preterm labor. So thinking about nutrition and just eating what you have around you. We're here in California. So if not get some frozen berries and make yourself a smoothie. We do have access to really great food here. And those are just some of the things that you can add into your diet to enhance the nutrition of keeping your placenta healthy so baby stays healthy.

Sarah Trott: [00:16:22] Great. Absolutely. So the takeaway just if someone were to add three things to their shopping list maybe a tea with alfalfa or one of the other things you mentioned teas, maybe some livers to add depth of flavor to sauces and chilies and things and citrus. Yeah. OK.

Spring Childers: [00:16:41] You got it.

Sarah Trott: [00:16:42] Fantastic. Ok so my next question. So some people eat their placentas.

Spring Childers: [00:16:49] Yes they do. We're mammals.

Sarah Trott: [00:16:52] Let's talk about that!

Spring Childers: [00:16:55] Ok. So let's talk about it. There is one simple thing I can say about you eating your placenta. It's what I just responded with. We are mammals, we are animals. Every animal on the face of this earth eats their placenta. I grew up on a small farm in the central coast of California with goats and pigs and cows and horses and dogs and cats. And when you see a dog eat their placenta it's pretty normal. It's like OK they're just cleaning up after the birthing because you do see them Hunt and Catch meat. But when you see a goat who just has this bottom layer of teeth or a cow and they get those big grinders to chew their cud it and you see them turn around and lick off all the membrane and everything off their baby and make sure baby's OK and baby goes to nurse and then you see them go over and start eating their placenta. And now,

you know there's a question of whether that is you know to get rid of the evidence so to speak. As you know if you're out in the wild you don't want any predators coming in and I can speak on the farm that the dogs and the cats and everybody comes up to get a little bit of placenta. And then that's another Question: Why would anybody else want that placenta? You know this is a very strong life force that gives some strong nutrients, hormones and replenishes the system. So when I witnessed that growing up and then in my adult life when my good friend said she wanted to encapsulate her placenta I didn't really question it. I just thought Yeah that sounds perfect and I had been a chef for about 15 years so I said OK , how do we do it? What do we gotta cook it? What do you do? Put it in a smoothie? and the midwife said well there is a way to do it and she could have done it for my friend, however my friend couldn't afford it. So the midwives response was It is not rocket science. The reason I charge a fee is because it takes my time and effort and you can do this for her. And the other reason why someone might not do it themselves is because they have just had a baby and partner the father just you know the new baby comes in to the family. There's not really a time or space to be cooking up placentas and taking care and that is where the fellow villagers as I like to say but the family around can help. And so we helped my friend do this and it's not rocket science. You know we did it in a way Chinese medicine way, it's referred to but, basically we were preserving it on a low impact way to keep all the nutrients and the hormones. And so we steamed it and then sliced it up very thinly and put it in a dehydrator so that it could dry a very low impact heat. It can be done in the oven on very low heat maybe turning on & off the oven. This particular friend the very first placenta I ever helped to make into medicine. I had a mortar & pestle that I got specifically and I went over every day and I put a few pieces in & and hand ground it and we sat and we talked. And I ground I just got to get a little teary because it was such an amazing process to be with my sister friend and share in that postpartum time and be doing something for her that was going to nourish her and her baby into this new realm of life. And I would just grind up as we had a little encapsulator that holds about 24 capsules so we would grind up about 24 a day and then we put them in the refrigerator and she was taking them a few times a day. And it really helped in her recovery and she had had depression earlier in her 20s of her life and she was really conscious about making sure she did everything she could to support herself. And this was one of the things that she did to support herself physiologically spiritually and emotionally because the placenta does all of those things.

Sarah Trott: [00:21:12] And by encapsulation just to be totally clear you mean putting that dehydrated ground up pieces of the placenta into a small pill form.

Spring Childers: [00:21:23] Absolutely. So there are so many different ways that we can ingest placenta and it's what resonates with you. And so I invite everyone to kind of think about what that might be for them. I personally got to grow my own placenta and baby and to give birth and then ingest it. Because I had seen women do this consume their placenta in so many different ways, I wanted to try the different ways and see how they made me feel and I could also tell people. And so one thing that was recommended is just like I had seen the goats do on the farm, is to eat a piece raw postpartum. And I was also apprenticing as a midwife and I had been a birth doula so I had seen women who might be having a bit of blood loss postpartum or who might be having some heavy cramping or whatnot. The midwives recommended just pull a little piece off raw and eat this, you know. And I had heard stories and read stories of course, in my studies of women being not near modern facilities or medical facilities having their babies and whether it was historic or modern I don't remember but I do remember the stories of a woman having a little excess bleeding postpartum and just cutting off a big chunk of that placenta, eating it and the bleeding resuming to normal and the uterus you know contracting down and having that recovery from just eating that placenta. So there are so many different ways to consume it. Like I said. So I always recommend it to women because I experienced it and it was wonderful. I took a piece off not right after the birth I had a late night birth and so I fell asleep. The next morning I spent some time with my placenta and I got to study it and look around at the codyledons and I found a little piece that I just thought I want that piece and I had my orange juice ready and I was going to chase it. And I was going to choke it back and I eat meat, so you know if it wasn't didn't seeming to be a big problem that I popped it in and chewed it and I tasted it and it was so good. And I didn't want to drink the orange juice and I wanted more. Yes it's true. And so I thought oh must i be crazy? No. Because I heard this story time and time and time again from women. I realized that same primal feeling that comes out when you're birthing your baby and protecting your baby and all those things that we do with our babies. That was just another moment where I felt like really primal and I needed another piece and so I had one more piece and I didn't really feel like I needed much after. And you know my uterus within eight hours my uterus was down four fingers which in measurement is almost down to a normal postpartum size. My mom walked in the room and said, "What happened to you? You look just really bright and beautiful and

just colorful. You look like you just got all your energy back." And I didn't think that I looked less before but I knew what she was talking about. And so I share that story because I think it's important that women know you can have that postpartum. It's right there and you can have it and it's yours. You made it and it's yours and it is your baby's. And guess what, your baby gets the benefits to you and your baby's been with this placenta for nine, 10 months. And when it comes out it's separated from the placenta and this is a way for your baby to have that reconnection and that reconnection comes through you by you nurturing your body with the placenta. And by the baby nursing and being with you and receiving those benefits.

Sarah Trott: [00:25:18] What is it in the placenta that gives us that color that comes back or that helps our uterus contract or that adds to the milk that our babies are getting.

Spring Childers: [00:25:26] It's all the same things that were benefiting us and the baby inside. So that organ still has all those properties of those hormones. And it's an organ meat. So it's got iron and it's got minerals and you know zinc and nutrients that are replenishing our bodies but to a very higher level. I think one thing about it is that you know you could eat another animal's organ meat and get these great nutrition and properties but you're not going to get this is yours you made it. So it's made for you. And it's not made for anyone else and I have had lactation consultants ask me, say, "Well I don't think that she should have her placenta. She's having trouble with her milk coming in." and when the placenta is birthed, it's part of the process to say hey it's time to make milk. And in my study, well intuitively I knew that that just couldn't be right because why does everybody else all the other animals eat their placenta they get their milk.

Sarah Trott: [00:26:26] Including like you say the goat and the cow which are vegetarian. They don't eat meat.

Spring Childers: [00:26:31] They eat grasses. Yeah. So there was that part to it. But now in my studies I've seen that, do you know what happens with organic material, plants, herbs how they work in our body? They're regulating to what's happening in our body. This is not a synthetic medicine. This is not an advil that you take that works on the pain receptors. This is your own. And so I believe that you take this into your body and it helps your body regulate with whatever you need. And I've seen it happen. I've

seen women who need more milk in their milk to come in and they've gotten more milk. I've seen women who are engorged and take their capsules. They don't take three or four they might just take one or half and seen them milk regulate. So I think that the properties that we're receiving back from the placenta are just what we need.

Sarah Trott: [00:27:26] Yeah I think that's the fear right because the milk comes in for women often when there's a big drop in one hormone and the other one kicks in and takes its place. And you can sort of demystify this for us, the idea that, "Oh if I take my placenta pills then it does have all the hormones that I had when I was flying high as a kite on my pregnancy and I felt so great. And I don't want to get postpartum depression so I take these pills are going to give me they'll be my little uppers, my little natural drugs that I can take." But then there's the fear that, "Oh is it going to negate my milk production?"

Spring Childers: [00:27:57] Absolutely. And that is something that I've had women ask or like I said even professionals asking and what I have seen in the results is that they help balance out what you need. And I always tell them too, you know this is yours. So you need to regulate it. You know how much do I take? Well you know we can recommend one to two caps a couple times a day and you could take them all postpartum until they're gone or if you keep them in the fridge you could have them up to a year or two. I'm sure the potencies going to go down but you need to decide. So I will share myself as an example that you know I took about two capsules a day for the first week. And then after, I took about one, and then after that I kind of forgot about it. And here's another little note. Sometimes you just forget to take it. That's why it's wonderful for everyone to know that you have that as a remedy and they can remind you. I had a moment a few weeks postpartum and I found myself on the floor crying. I couldn't get deeper into that floor. I wasn't sad. I wasn't happy. I was just being in an overwhelm of probably hormonal flux at the time. My baby was sleeping and happy. I called my husband and he immediately went to the protective You know male to save me, "What do you mean? What happened?" and I said, "I don't know. Everything's fine." And he gathered himself and reminded me that I had a placenta that I could take to help with that. And so I did. And I don't remember coming up or down or anything. All I remember is that I made it through that day and I felt balanced and great. So I think the example of that story is just that it's our medicine. We need it. We need to regulate it

ourselves and decide how it's going to work and see how much we need when we need it.

Sarah Trott: [00:29:52] Yeah I think it's interesting you're reminding me of a story that someone told me about how during their pregnancy they actually had a lot of erosion in their teeth. So she actually lost teeth during pregnancy. And I can only think that's because of what you were mentioning earlier about the placenta taking what it needs from the body. So if you're not giving your body the nutrition it needs your body is going to get what it needs to make that baby from you. Which is why the nutrition part is so important. But I think what I'm also taking from this is what you're saying about balance. Say we eat a sack of oranges if we don't need it. We don't need it but it's not going to hurt if we're consuming a placenta pill and our body doesn't need it, it's not really going to hurt us is it.

Spring Childers: [00:30:33] Yeah I have an example of how it won't hurt you. I did have a client who had her acupuncturist make her placenta into capsules . A doula client who I visited postpartum and said, "OK how are you doing? How are your capsules working?" And she said, "Oh great." I said, "You know you could maybe you could take some." That she was having a little feeling a little tired from being awake at night nursing & everything and I said you know this is probably a good time you could take some and it'll help replenish your body and she said, "Oh I already took them all!" Within about three days she'd about 70 capsules. So she said, "Oh, I didn't really feel any difference." So there you have it. Not much happened there.

Sarah Trott: [00:31:21] That was right for her.

Spring Childers: [00:31:22] It was right for her and I do say to a woman is taking capsules or just like when you want to maybe pick that raw piece or not. You know you just pull out a couple capsules or you look at the placenta and you say what do I need? And you take what you need. And you'll know. you'll say I want two, I want five, or I want that big chunk or whatever.

Sarah Trott: [00:31:39] Yeah.

Spring Childers: [00:31:40] One thing that reminds you when you spoke of your friend with her teeth and how the placenta and the pregnancy will sustain by gathering whatever it can from the body it's just a reminder that we can always be building the nutrition in our body even when we just kind of think we might want to be getting pregnant and really being conscious about nurturing our body and preparing the body for growing new life. And I think historically this has been the way of humans and even if you go back to the earliest in the biblical story of Mary. Very you know kind of traditional story whether you know it or not is simply that this angel came to her and said prepare yourself for you're going to carry the spirit of God. And I think this is just a really great symbol to say Prepare Yourself for Life. You are going to be the life giving force. You're going to be the mother. And so you know whether you have an angel telling you that or not. Prepare yourself and give your body that nutrition so you can be a strong mother. And so that you can nourish this life and this placenta going to do the work as well.

Sarah Trott: [00:32:57] I love that I really do. And it's more than the prenatal vitamins.

Spring Childers: [00:33:03] It is those are helpful though.

Sarah Trott: [00:33:06] Yes, do take your prenatal vitamins for sure. Tell me again everything that you provided for me when I gave you my placenta and actually first on a practical note I remember thinking and deciding all right well if this isn't going to hurt me I'll try it rather pragmatically but it could benefit me. So great let's do it. But I had a logistical question about ooh how do I get my placenta where it needs to be. And the answer was a Tupperware container. But what do you recommend for people who are sort of interested in this.

Spring Childers: [00:33:37] I recommend that everyone keep their placenta whether you want to do something with it or not. you know this was the life giving force of your child. And it is honored around the world throughout time. There's all sorts of cultural traditions honoring the placenta no matter what. I say bring it home and you can put it in the freezer. Great modern equipment. We have a freezer and you can save it and it'll be fine. It could be good up to six months if you do you want to consume it. But you could even just keep it and then possibly bury it later under a tree or in your yard. And you know whether you stay there or not. I mean there's so many different traditions about the placenta being the brother sister spirit because it did come from the embryo. It

grows out of the embryo. So it can be technically this brother sister spirit and in many traditions around the world they do bury the placenta in the home compound so that this will be also the place where you're buried and so that this human will know where to come home. In that way, one little tradition to honor the placenta. I always recommend you bring it home. if you have the baby at home keep the placenta around. keep it in the freezer in storage. If you are planning to have your baby in the hospital here in the Bay Area, I know a lot of the rules but they can be different all around our country and the world. So I always ask you know what their policies are. I believe there are a couple of hospitals around here that you do have to sign a waiver that you are taking a biohazard out even though you're taking your baby out. So sometimes it doesn't make sense to me. But it is a blood borne pathogen problem. So you probably take it out with care and the easiest thing is to get two one gallons zip-locks. That's what I tell people. You can if you want bring a quart container. A placenta is going to be about a pound so you know think about that big steak or a pound of meat ground meat or something. It's going to be about that big. So and it's also it's an organ meat so it's soft and forming so it can fit itself into a nice quart container. And I always say double bag it, you know two layers around it because it does have blood liquid form. And if you're transferring it it's not so fun if that leaks. Yeah not really. OK. That brings us to the people who are there with you birthing. I always recommend that everyone in the room knows but especially your partner. And if you have a doula or mom or anybody sister friend someone who is there helping but that everybody knows that you want to keep that placenta because there tends to be quite a lot going on. It is not honored in the same way in the hospital setting as it might be at home or in other places around the world. But this third stage is not honored in the way that the placenta is usually just disposed of. So unless you are very clear because it's just routine for them, they're not going to save it. So you got to be like flagging how, "We want to keep her placenta we want to keep her placenta!" and when the placenta comes out we want to keep our placenta. And you get your placenta in your containers and keep your placenta. There's always ice at a hospital. But if you bring a little cooler or something, it's great to have and then you can just get the ice on and keep it cold. They usually won't let you keep them in the refrigerators. That's it. You could transport it back to your home or have someone come and pick it up and you know do the processing for you, if that's what you'd like to do. You know there's always ways that you can do it yourself . You can absolutely process it into the capsules and drying and do that form. But as well as the raw placenta has similar benefits but it's the raw placenta is a little bit more because it hasn't been cooked at all so the properties

are a little bit stronger and so consuming the placenta raw can definitely give you a little bit higher of a lift. And so some people like to consume it raw. And you can slice it up and have it in portions where you put it in smoothies. Another way to do it is to actually make the smoothies and portion the smoothies out and then keep those in the freezer and then you can eat those over time. Chinese medicine tradition is the way of steaming it is a way of converting it into a warm herb and traditionally we want to replenish moms with warmth. Now around the world there's the mother roasting-- it's one term. But it is moms being in for at least two weeks to 40 days with the heat or the fire under the bed kind of is the older way of looking at it and with lots of heat and just mom and baby contact. Warm whole chicken broth. This is the most open time a mom will ever be, just given birth and everything is open and kind of coming back down. But the milk is coming in and your uterus is still healing and part of the reason for steaming it and drying is turning it into a warm herb and replenishing the body with warmth. However if raw is what you're called for your body and your replenishing and your nourishment that's fine too.

Sarah Trott: [00:38:45] And you also gave me a fabulous tincture.

Spring Childers: [00:38:48] Yeah. So the tincture. you know I didn't really know a lot about tinctures and I've read over it and it is traditional and it is in a lot of different countries have done different ways of making tinctures. And so the way that I picked up was to simply pull a small piece off the size of a nickel or a quarter depending into a couple ounces of vodka. I try to get the 50 percent you know 100 proof. In California we can't get the hundred and ninety proof so you know this'll do. And it's just very simply a different way to preserve it and to have it for a lifelong preservation. First time I came across this was a friend whose midwife had made her a big 16 ounce tincture. Then she in turn gave that to her mother when she was going through her menopausal time. Her mom claims that you know one of those kind of like a lot of placenta consumers that, I don't know if it was one way or the other but it didn't hurt. There are the benefits of this placenta tincture and doing it in the raw way where it's more just an essence because it sits for a couple days in the sunlight which helps fix the placenta and helps draw out the properties into the alcohol. After a couple days, it's not sealed tight in a container it has just a cheese cloth over the top with the oxygen also being part of that process. So just a couple days tincture or essence depending on your school of thought and proper terminology. And so then the raw piece you'll see it's pretty white after it's been in the

alcohol for a couple days as most of the properties have been drawn out and fixed into the alcohol and now the alcohol is the carrier. And so that tincture can be used just as well as the capsules whenever you're feeling it and as well there is a beautiful thing about it is that it can be used on the baby because the baby doesn't need to ingest it the baby can just have a couple drops on the bottoms of their feet or be on the top of their head and they will absorb the properties and once again then that gives babies a chance to receive the properties of the placenta bringing balance and that reconnection with the placenta and with the mom, giving them that kind of calm and centeredness that they may need because they are going through gigantic development leaps. As we all know.

Sarah Trott: [00:41:20] Yes absolutely. So tips and tricks for consumption. I know that you had mentioned something about mastitis and something about white wine.

Spring Childers: [00:41:30] Ok so in Chinese medicine we just talked about how the placenta is converted into a warm herb. This means that it's energetically going into the body and not deciphering between any pathogens but just enhancing the heat. Well there are heat conditions which would be a cold or flu or rash and an infection. And so mastitis is one of those heat conditions that we don't want to enhance. And so this would be a time where you might not want to take not might, you don't want to take your placenta capsules. It doesn't have to be full blown mastitis. I think anyone who's had anywhere near a breast infection coming on is it's pretty noticeable and it's usually from not nursing enough from doing too much and being you know overtired. So in which case if you're feeling these flu like symptoms whether it's a flu cold or possible breast infection I recommend you just stop taking your placenta capsules. This is recommended by acupuncturists across the board that I've learned from so they would say to stop taking the capsules you know of course for breast infection or any kind of infection you want to rest maybe boost up on your vitamin C or whatever you do to boost your immune system and nurse a lot and stay warm and stay hydrated and replenish your system. When you're feeling back up on your feet then you can go ahead and take your capsules again. And so another Chinese Traditional Chinese Medicine way is to take capsules or the powder with white wine. Enhancing the depth of the medicine as it goes into your body. I tried this, I didn't try it immediately postpartum because I didn't want any alcohol in my system for my baby. But it's not you know it's recommended just like a small ounce or a half ounce with the capsules. And I did try this

after a couple months postpartum. And I did feel like it went a little bit deeper and I felt calmer and there was just something calmer and in a deeper way. And I understand now why they say it that way. It's defined that way because that's kind of how it felt.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:44] And white wine lovely.

Spring Childers: [00:43:46] Absolutely. it's lovely for moms and it does take give that extra calming effect.

Sarah Trott: [00:43:53] And of course if breastfeeding we wouldn't want to consume much at all, but by a very small amount is acceptable.

Spring Childers: [00:43:59] Absolutely everything is acceptable in small amounts.

Sarah Trott: [00:44:02] I wanted to talk about some of the more beautiful and interesting things that came out of working with you which was that I ended up with some beautiful artwork prints of my placenta.

Spring Childers: [00:44:12] Yes. Working with placentas is an absolute honor for me. It's an honor to be part of this process of life. And I feel blessed that this is a path that I'm on and that women have called me to do this and asked me to do this for them and complete this process of birth for them and helping them to become moms and to you know start into the next phase of their family. I always try and just honor this placenta, this life giving force and one of the things that I do, there are so many different traditions and like I said I've kind of read and researched them all and they just seem endless and they're always coming up and I learn so much even from my clients I've learned so many different things that can be done or that their parents and grandparents have done in their families. I try and take photos and then I also like to just take that tree of life, the baby's side the side the baby lived on, and you'll see all the veins that are forming that tree of life and that's its own pattern. And there are-- I read in a memoir of a midwife in the south I believe it was. Anyway somewhere in the United States that there was an older midwife who would read those veins and the pattern and it will be a fortune telling of sorts to the child's life. There are other cultures and traditions, there is fortunetelling around the placenta. Meaning you know where and what a child will be. I usually will just take the blood that was in the umbilical cord and there's a little bit left in

there and kind of squeeze that out and use that to make like a print on the baby's side of the placenta and the cord and then press down paper over it to make this print. One thing that I feel I'm honoring too it is a keepsake for not just the mom but for the baby who lived in this pattern for their whole beginning existence. We all did that. And so I think that is a symbol of who we are and our love for nature. Everybody loves a walk in the woods and even if you don't look deep inside because you do and if you stand at the trunk of a tree and you look up there is something that is known to all of us because we all lived in that. We started off that way. In fact there is a tradition in desert communities that a child will come out who has not seen a tree and be able to draw a tree-- that symbolizes the knowledge of you know who we are and where we come from that we all have it. And so I try and honor that by making prints and then as well as keeping the cord I put it in a spiral because there is you know the spiral of life. I do believe and you know every step it's not a circle but it's a spiral. Every step is different and everybody's life is different and everybody's patterns different and as well as the cord it is this great spirally piece of the placenta and the baby and the way that it spirals is how the two arteries in the vein grow quicker than the cord. And so every baby has their own pattern, their own spiral. So I like to just kind of see how the cord falls and put it in a spiral and dry it and many cultures do honor the cord. Some might bury it near the river that the child will be a good swimmer or a good fisherman. Others, there's a culture that hangs it from the tree. So they'll be good climbers. I had a client once, I believe they were from the Philippines, her mother said that they would wrap it in newspaper and hang it in the windows so that when people walk by they will see the paper and the cord and it will give the child more scholarly energy or knowledge.

Sarah Trott: [00:48:19] And what are some of the other traditions that you have heard of?.

Spring Childers: [00:48:22] So one thing that I came across when we were traveling was near the Grand Tetons. That's right. I'm a sucker for information visitors center info booth. So my husband said, "OOOOOh that one looks really big honey, let's go!" and so we went and they had this huge native american display and in one section that was the different traditions around childbearing and child caring, I read on one of the plaques that they would keep the umbilical cord as you referred to earlier, that little piece that falls off or the cord from the placenta, they kept that is the baby's first talisman. And this was to be with the baby or the child the human forever. And so I think it's just a reminder

of where we began they would story in a small tortoise shell purse and the turtle or the tortoise is the symbol of Mother Earth or the womb. And if you look at a really small tortoise shell is about the size of a womb. I know because my father went to Native American ceremony and bought me one. This is one of the traditions that I try and honor, too, by putting the dried spiraled cord into a little pouch for the moms, babies and their family. I also have an Indonesian friend who says that they would dry theirs and use it as a chew toy. And so I've heard of this now through the communities that I've worked with that some have done this and because it has these properties that can help with the pain relieving of teething and so they would chew on it. But as we know it's dried and then the saliva is going to make it soft and so moms have put it in the freezer. Modern day moms and their babies have chewed on that. So that was another tradition that has come to the modern family as well that I've heard of that we did try it ourselves.

Sarah Trott: [00:50:28] What advice do you have for people in relation to the birth and the placenta?.

Spring Childers: [00:50:32] We have had how the placenta was formed and then the stage before what we're talking about we're kind of talking about fourth stage and you know things we do with the placenta after it's been born. But I do want to mention that how the placenta is born is pretty important. After the baby comes out the cord is still attached and the cord is still working and the placenta is still working when the baby has been born and there was a tradition created in the early nineteen hundreds kind of around the industrialization of medicine to cut the cord immediately and even separate moms and babies which is still something that is kind of I think traditionally practiced in hospitals and maybe not even knowing physiologically why they would be doing that. I think in the history it kind it shows that during that time that this tradition was started. Moms were under heavy influence of drugs when we were giving birth and so the babies would come out pretty drugged because anything that passes through the placenta goes to the baby. And so these babies were coming out pretty drugged and needing to have some help. And so the best ways that they were dealing with it at the time were to go ahead and cut the cord because of course the neonatal care was in a separate room than where the mother was giving birth. And so this tradition has kind of carried on to our modern day to where kind of in the hospitals is routine to just cut the cord right when the baby comes out. Now physiologically this is probably not the best choice. So what happens is that the cord continues to pump blood and that blood going

into the baby the pressure pushes the liquid from the lungs out. And you need about 45 milliliters to dilate these capillaries. This is the time that the baby is transitioning to air. Babies don't just come out and breathe. OK they have this liquid in their lungs. This is a transitional time it's a physiological time that happens minutes and after the birth. So it takes about 90 to 120 seconds for 50 percent distribution throughout of this blood to go in into the body in about three minutes postpartum you're going to have a 100 percent distribution. But if you're cutting that cord immediately then you have about half the blood that you need that baby has about half the blood it needs. And so if it needs 100 milliliters and it's getting half so 45 to 50 milliliters then what the body's going to do because the number one thing it needs to do is breathe and stay alive, is all the blood is going to go to the lungs and to the brain and the rest of the organs and limbs are going to get less blood. And so that's just going to take a little bit longer for babies to transition. Physiologically they're going a little bit harder time and of course this has been going on, well it's 2015, approximately a hundred years. And you know we're doing all right. We're surviving but maybe we could be doing a little better and maybe we could help this transition to be a little bit better for babies and give them the ability to come into this life a little bit stronger and something that comes up too is jaundice. So by letting the cord pulse for a few minutes up to an hour --the average is it's going to pulse for you know 3, 5, 10 minutes. OK. But the true physiological cord closure takes one and a half to three hours. So I've witnessed what midwives traditionally do in a home birth where there is no rush. And there's kind of not routine to cut that cord right away, is that babies are born, placentas are then born after. And it's a slow transition. And these babies tend to have less of a jaundice happening and sometimes there might be what's called a breastfeeding jaundice or they might have a little bit higher bilirubin because the cord was left intact and because they have that extra blood that you wouldn't see otherwise. But that's normal. OK. And so that is normal and it will clear out with good breastfeeding over time and exposure to the sun. But the physiological jaundice that we see right at the in the first 24 hours that might be related to having maybe not the full amount of blood they could have had the cord pulsed out all that blood. There are some worries that the baby gets too much blood and it can't be regulated. But let's think about the physiology of birth and isn't everything put in place for a reason? And when we were first born for thousands of years no one was running around cutting cords right away. Also, we do know that the vein actually stays open and so there's a backwash of blood coming in through the two arteries. And then there is an open vein so there is a backwash that if the baby is done receiving the blood that it

needs and the placenta is still pumping that there is a way for it to not receive that blood but for it to backwash back in and then maybe that's a signal for the placenta to stop pumping you know not quite a hundred percent on every bit of the physiology of how the process works but we do know this much.

Sarah Trott: [00:56:06] I have learned so much in this conversation. I want to thank you on behalf of me and everyone who's listening thank you so much for sharing that.

Spring Childers: [00:56:15] You're welcome. Thank you so much for having me. It was an honor to be here. It's always an honor to share information about placentas. This is something that I think we all can remember as humans. That it's an important part of our anatomy and physiology, our spirituality and our emotional state postpartum.

Sarah Trott: [00:56:35] You can find out more about Esther Gallagher on <http://www.esthergallagher.com/>. You can also subscribe to this podcast in order to hear more from us. [Click here for iTunes](#) and [click here for Google Play](#). Thank you for listening everyone and I hope you'll join us next time on the Fourth Trimester. The theme music on this podcast was created by Sean Trott. Hear more at <https://soundcloud.com/seantrott>. Special thanks to my true loves: my husband Ben, daughter Penelope, and baby girl Evelyn. Don't forget to share the Fourth Trimester Podcast with any new and expecting parents. I'm Sarah Trott. Goodbye for now.