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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LOTUS BIRTH: HOLISTIC PRACTICE

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Abstract

Lotus birth is leaving the umbilical cord uncut after childbirth to the placenta until it dries and falls off by itself. The practice has been observed in many countries, including the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Turkey. Enhanced Blood & nourishment, reduce injury & infection, faster healing and emotional well being are benefits of lotus birth. The decision to opt for a lotus birth is personal and should be made with consideration of the available evidence, cultural beliefs, and medical advice.

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Introduction:-

Childbirth transcends mere biology; it is a communal event shaped by cultural beliefs and societal norms. Alternative childbirth practices, diverging from traditional hospital-based medical approaches, highlight a shift towards natural, holistic, and affirming birthing experiences, showcasing diverse regional variations across the country.

Lotus birth (or umbilical cord nonseverance - UCNS) is leaving the umbilical cord uncut after childbirth to the placenta until it dries and falls off by itself. It usually detaches after 5-15 days.

WHO recommends delayed cord clamping (performed 1 to 3 minutes after birth) is recommended for all births while initiating simultaneous essential newborn care.

History of lotus birth

The concept of lotus birth gained attention in the late 20th century, particularly through the work of childbirth educators and advocates of natural birth. This practice was first described by scientist Clair Lotus Day in 1974 after witnessing a chimpanzee giving birth without severing the placenta from her baby. The practice has been observed in many countries, including the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Turkey. In India, a hospital in Bangalore experimented with lotus birth at the decision of a family.

The first reported cases of lotus birth date back to 2004 in Australia. According to advocates of lotus birth, because the fetus and the placenta are formed from the same cell, they represent a single unit. Thus, if the newborn is not artificially separated from this part of itself, a considerable amount of blood will be transported to the newborn through the umbilical cord.

Benefits of lotus birth

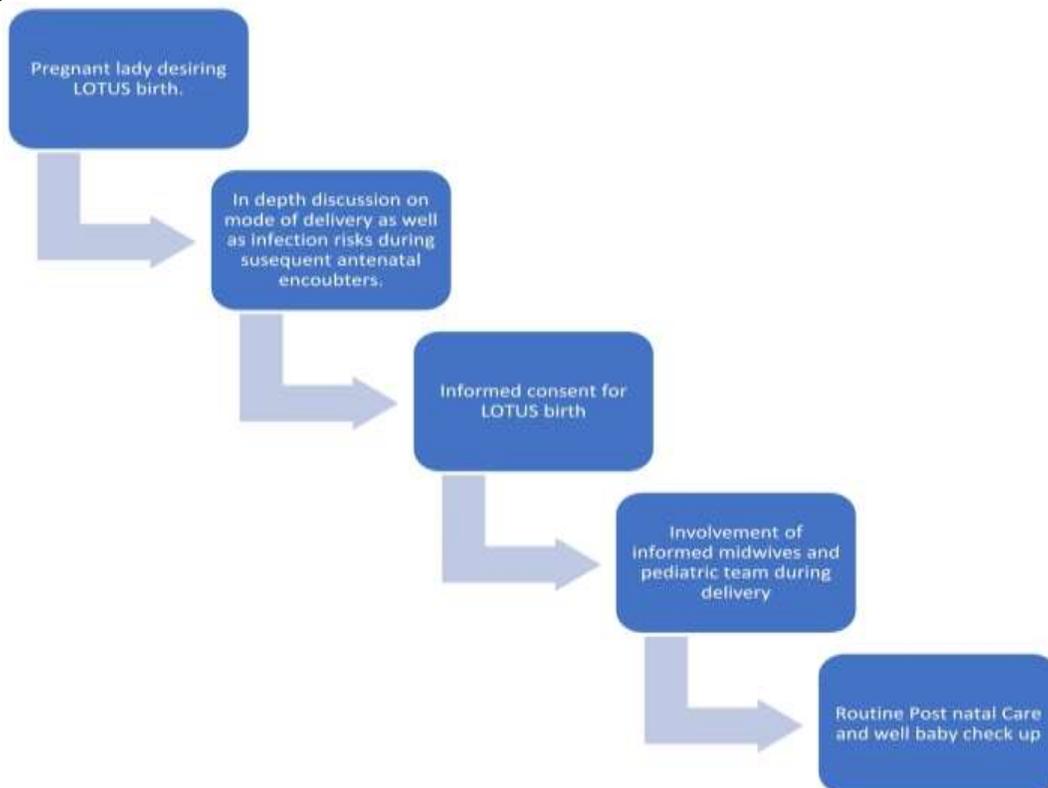
1. **Enhanced Blood & nourishment:** Similar to delayed cord clamping, leaving the umbilical cord intact allows oxygenated blood to continue flowing to the baby, potentially improving circulation and brain development.

2. **Reduced Injury & Infection Risk:** By keeping the umbilical cord and placenta intact, there is no open wound, which reduces the risk of infection & injury.
3. **Faster Healing of the Umbilicus:** According to lotus birth educators, babies who undergo lotus birth tend to have well-healed belly buttons without complications, promoting quicker healing.
4. **Emotional Wellbeing:** Advocates believe lotus birth can ease the newborn's transition from womb to world, potentially reducing birth trauma and supporting a gentle start to life outside the womb.
5. **Postpartum Recovery:** When a new mom has a newborn still connected to the placenta, it forces the mother to move slowly, carefully, and minimally. This approach may support the mother's and child's well-being during the postpartum period, emphasizing a respectful recovery process over quick physical recovery.
6. **Spiritual ritual:** To honor the shared life between baby and placenta

Steps to maintain Lotus birth:

1. **Prepare the placenta:** After birth, place the placenta in a bowl or a container lined with an absorbent material like a cloth or towel
2. **Rinse & dry:** Gently rinse the placenta with warm water and dry. This helps to remove any blood and tissue residue.
3. **Salt and herbs:** Apply a generous amount of salt to the placenta to help with preservation and odor control. A mixture of 1 kg sea salt, 0.5 kg rosemary, and 0.5 kg lavender is made. Half of this mixture is sprinkled on the placenta on the first day and the other half on the second day.
4. **Wrap the placenta:** Wrap the placenta in a clean, absorbent cloth & need to change the cloth daily to keep it dry & prevent bacterial growth.
5. **Monitor the baby & placenta:** Keep the placenta close to the baby but ensure it is not pulling on the umbilical cord.
6. **Hygiene & care:** Wash hands before and after handling the placenta. Check the placenta regularly for any signs of infection such as foul smell, discoloration, or unusual discharge.
7. **Natural detachment:** The umbilical cord will dry & detach naturally within 5-15 days. Until then, continue to care for the placenta & keep it clean & dry.
8. **Post detachment:** Once the cord detaches, discard the placenta according to personal or cultural preferences.

Pathway for Lotus birth:



Drawbacks Of Lotus Birth

Infection:

Placenta is a decaying human organ containing blood, and can foster bacterial growth if not meticulously maintained. Parents opting for lotus birth must diligently monitor their babies for signs of infection. Lotus birth has already been associated with staphylococcus lugdensis **sepsis (skin and tissue infections) and endocarditis** (heart inflammation), **neonatal omphalitis** (umbilical cord infections)

Inconvenience:

Carrying around the placenta is not only unfashionable but also poses practical challenges and increases the risk of infection.

Cord avulsion:

The baby risks injury from the cord accidentally being ripped away from their body.

Idiopathic neonatal hepatitis:

Tricarico A, a study suggests a baby with lotus birth had persistent jaundice due to idiopathic neonatal hepatitis.

Polycythemia:

An abnormally high number of red blood cells.

Types of Lotus Birth:

Short lotus birth: The naturally sealed cord and cut 4-6hrs after birth

Full lotus birth: when the cord is allowed to dry until it becomes detaching naturally.

Medical consultation

The following are signs that need immediate medical consultation

1. Swelling, redness & feeling warmth around the umbilical cord
2. Temperature of 100 F
3. Baby doesn't feed properly
4. Baby sleeping more than usual

Conclusion:-

Acknowledging mother's opinions is a key recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO), and this principle extends to maternity care. Critics of lotus birth raise concerns about hygiene, potential infection risks, and the practical challenges of handling the placenta during the initial days postpartum. Ultimately, the decision to opt for a lotus birth is personal and should be made with consideration of the available evidence, cultural beliefs, and medical advice.

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