

The placenta is an **organ that your body grows inside your uterus during pregnancy**. Its purpose is to **provide** nutrients, oxygen, electrolytes, and more to your fetus. It also **collects wastes** from the fetus.

## STRUCTURE

The placenta is **circular**, and shaped like a disc. At delivery, it is usually around **22cm** in diameter, **2.5cm** thick, and weighs around **1 pound**.

The side of the placenta facing the fetus is called the **chorionic plate**. This is where the umbilical cord is attached.

The side of the placenta that is attached to your uterus is called the **basal plate**.

Between these plates is an area called the **intervillous space**.

## BLOCKING SUBSTANCES

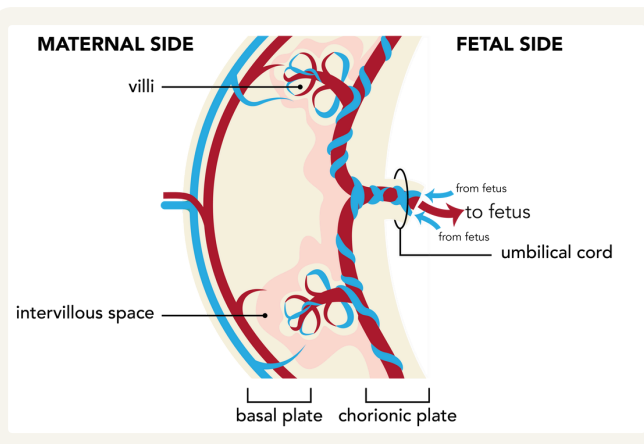
The placenta is able to **block some substances** from entering the baby's circulation, **but not all**. This is why it's important to follow guidelines around what is safe to consume during pregnancy and what is not.

## MONITORING OF THE PLACENTA

During pregnancy, you will have **ultrasounds** that give us important information about your placenta including the **location**, **grade**, and **resistance of blood flow** through the placenta.

The **location** of your placenta is important if it is low down, near or covering where your baby will come out. You can learn more about this in our handout "**Placental Abnormalities**". The **grade** of your placenta is a scoring system used to give us information about "the quality of your placenta." The **resistance of blood flow** tells us how easily nutrients and oxygen are getting to your baby.

We use this information, along with other details of your pregnancy, such as the growth of the fetus, to make **important decisions about how frequently to monitor your pregnancy and timing of delivery**.



## DEVELOPMENT

The placenta starts to develop at the **beginning of pregnancy**. Over the next few months, it continues to develop into its **mature form**, and **enlarges as your uterus expands**.

## DELIVERY OF THE PLACENTA

After your baby is delivered, you will enter what is called the **third stage of labour**. This is when you **deliver your placenta**. You can learn more about the delivery of the placenta in our handout "**Stages of Labour**".

### References

Burton GJ, Fowden AL. The placenta: a multifaceted, transient organ. *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci*. 2015;370(1663):20140066.

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