

## Storage of the whenua

For reasons of tapu (sacredness), please avoid storing your whenua in the fridge or freezer where food is kept. Korero more about this with your Kaumatua if you are not sure.

As an alternative, bury your whenua in a large pot with a shrub or plant on top. This is a temporary option until you are able to return to your own whenua. As a suggestion plant a rongoa plant on top like a kawakawa plant.

## Disposal and burial of the whenua

The hospital will dispose of the whenua if you choose not to take it yourself. These whenua as well as some tissue and body parts are cremated and disposed of in landfill areas.

## Testing of the whenua

If we need to test the whenua, we will ask for your consent. Typically, we do this when there is a complication of pregnancy or birth that may need more investigation. Testing may give important information that can help to explain what has happened and to improve the care we give you in future pregnancies.

We try to return your whenua to you as soon as we can. It usually takes from 1-4 weeks depending on which tests are required. Test results will be discussed with you at a follow up appointment and is confidential.

## Te Manaaki i to whenua

Your whenua is treated with care and respect at all times.

If removing your whenua from plastic for burial please wear gloves. We do not recommend burying any plastic into Papatuanuku (Earth Mother), as plastic does not biodegrade or break down.

Wash your hands well after burying your whenua, particularly if it has been returned to you after testing.

It is a good idea to talk about your plans for the whenua with your Lead Maternity Carer Midwife or Doctor.

## Contact Phone Number

Te Manawa o Hine, Māori Midwives

0800 866 446

He Kamaka Waiora

093074949 Ext 29200

**Te Whatu Ora**

Health New Zealand

Te Toka Tumai Auckland

Classification number: WH015 (Reviewed: August 2021)

Women's Health information Unit [hiws@adhb.govt.nz](mailto:hiws@adhb.govt.nz)

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

Te Manaaki i tō  
whenua

Caring for your  
whenua

Ko te pū  
Te more  
Te weu  
Te aka  
Te rea

Ko te wao nui  
Te kune  
Te whē  
Te kore  
Te pō

Ki ngā tangata Māori  
Nā Rangī rāua ko Papa  
Ko tēnei te tīmatanga o te ao  
*Na Papa Hohepa Delamare i tito*

The birth of pēpi signify a spiritual connection with Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) when the whenua (Placenta) is returned to the whenua (land). These taonga are interchangeable and highlight their importance for Iwi Māori. Papatuanuku nurtures and sustains us, gives us unity and identify as Māori whakapapa and birth right.

Kaimahi of Te Toka Tumai respect your decision about the care of your whenua. Please korero with your LMC about your wishes.

This leaflet gives you options about the care, burial or disposal of your whenua and iho (umbilical cord). We encourage you to think about your options and ask for advice from within your whānau (Kuia & Kaumatua).

## Ipu Whenua (Placental Vessel)

We welcome the use of your own waka (vessel) for your whenua. The use of Hue (gourds), Kite (weaved baskets), or other natural products are encouraged. You are welcome to bring your Ipu Whenua to National Women's with you.



## Taking your whenua home

If you have no Ipu Whenua, please feel free to bring biodegradable bags or similar for storage.

We have no storage facilities for whenua at National Women's so we ask that you or your whānau please take your whenua home from Labour and Birthing Suite.

We can provide an alternative option for taking your whenua home, but please remove your whenua from plastic prior to burying.



## Burying the whenua

Planting or burying your whenua may not be an option for you if you live in the city or live away from your turangawaewae or ancestral home.

If you are not sure what you want to do with your whenua, you could think about the following options:

- Consulting your Kuia and Kaumatua/ elders parents, whanau/family
- Bury the whenua at your turangawaewae, place of whānau, hapu or iwi tribal origin
- Bury the whenua at your home and plant a native tree, bush or plant
- Bury the whenua where you were born (or temporarily in a pot plant if you can't do this soon)

