

American Academy of Pediatrics

Frequently Asked Questions about Cord Blood Banking

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1. What is the difference between private cord blood banking and public cord blood banking?

- Private cord blood banking is storing the baby's cord blood for his/her own future use or use for a family member should the need arise. Alternatively, public cord blood banking, or donating, means that the baby's cord blood is stored in a cord blood bank and is available to anyone in need of a transplant or may be used research purposes.

2. I've been approached by a self-storage program to store my child's cord blood. Isn't it better to be safe than sorry? Should I store it or donate it?

Parents should consult their physician to help them make an informed decision.

- Cord blood donation should be encouraged with the cord blood is stored in a bank for public use.
- Private cord blood banking should be encouraged when there is knowledge of a full sibling in the family with a medical condition (malignant or genetic) that could potentially benefit from cord blood transplantation.
- If banking for future personal or family use, parents should know that most conditions that might be helped by cord blood stem cells already exist in the infant's cord blood and would not be used (ie, premalignant changes in stem cells).
- Storing cord blood as "biological insurance" should be discouraged because there currently is no scientific data to support (self) autologous transplantation..

3. Where can I donate cord blood?

- Contact your local hospital to determine if it is affiliated with a cord blood bank or contact any major university hospital or medical center in your state to find out if they accept cord blood donations.

4. Why isn't there a cord blood bank in my area?

- There are only a few cord blood banks in the United States; therefore, donation to a local bank is not possible in many areas. Many communities do not have the technical and financial resources necessary to establish and operate a cord blood bank.

5. Does it cost anything to donate cord blood?

- The public donor cord blood banks pay for the collection procedure and storing of the baby's cord blood, so there is no cost to the family for donating the baby's cord blood. However, there are significant fees associated with private storage of cord blood often including both the collection and the storage.

6. Are there any risks to donating cord blood?

- No, because the cord blood is collected after the baby is born and the umbilical cord is clamped and cut, it does not affect the baby or the birth experience. Cord blood collection

should not be performed in complicated deliveries. The cord blood stem cell-collection program should not alter routine practice for the timing of umbilical cord clamping.

7. What will happen to my child's cord blood if I donate it?

- If a family decides to donate a baby's cord blood and there is a cord blood bank in the area, the mother will need to obtain a collection kit that may include a family medical history questionnaire, a consent form, and the collection materials. The informed consent must be signed prior to the onset of active labor and before the cord blood collection. The consent must contain information pertaining to what tests are to be performed on the cord blood and how the parents will be informed should the test results be abnormal. Once a baby's cord blood is collected, it is typed, screened for infectious diseases and for hereditary hematologic diseases. If the donation is large enough and meets all of the required standards, it will be cryogenically stored for potential transplantation if a match is found or it might be used for quality improvement and research.

8. How does donated cord blood help others?

- It can help treat diseases such as malignancies, bone marrow failure, hemoglobinopathies, immunodeficiencies, and/or inborn errors of metabolism.

9. How long can cord blood be stored before it expires?

- Research is ongoing about the storage life of cord blood units.

10. How soon should I notify the cord blood bank in my area that I want to donate?

- The cord blood bank should be notified approximately 4-6 weeks before the due date or about week 34 of pregnancy.

11. If it turns out my child does need the cord blood, can I retrieve his/her's cord blood from the bank I donated to?

- Cord blood banked in a public program might not be available for future private use. Most conditions that might be helped by cord blood stem cells already exist in the infant's cord blood (ie, premalignant changes in stem cells).

12. If I decide to use a private cord blood bank, is there anything specific I should look for when selecting one?

- Does the company bank for personal and family use?
- Institutional Review Board-approved protocols should be in place, including annual disclosure of the financial interest and potential conflicts of interest.
- Financial viability and stability of the company should be considered
- Physician should disclose any potential conflict of interest.
- Company should have an informed consent process in place and require the parent to sign an informed consent.
- Cord blood banks should comply with national accreditation standards developed by the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT), the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Federal Trade Commission, and similar state agencies.