



Umbilical Cord Blood



Important Information for Parents-To-Be About Umbilical Cord Blood

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The State of Arizona recently passed a law requiring pregnant women to receive information about umbilical cord blood banking options. Umbilical cord blood banking is a relatively new procedure that saves lives. Now you have the chance to make a decision that could save the life of a family member, or someone else with a medical emergency. Please read the following information to learn more about the important medical options available to you.

What is cord blood?

After your baby is born, the umbilical cord is clamped and cut. The blood remains in the placenta and umbilical cord. In the past this blood commonly called cord blood was usually thrown away. We now know cord blood contains stem cells that can be used to help people with certain serious diseases. Now, families have three options available: discard the blood, donate it to a public cord bank, or retain it in a family cord blood bank. Cord blood that has been collected for storage at either a public cord blood bank or family cord blood bank is frozen and can be used when needed to help treat many serious diseases.

It is important to discuss questions regarding cord blood banking options with your health care provider as soon as possible during your pregnancy.

How can cord blood help?

The stem cells in cord blood are very important because they make many different types of cells in the body, including blood cells that carry oxygen, fight disease, and help stop bleeding. The stem cells in cord blood are primitive or undeveloped and can be transplanted in people to treat a number of life-threatening diseases. If needed, blood-forming cord blood stem cells can sometimes be used in autologous transplants (when a person receives his or her own umbilical cord blood) or more commonly, allogeneic transplants (when a person receives umbilical cord blood donated from someone else). A cord blood transplant does not need to be as perfectly matched to the person who receives it as in most other types of transplants. Because cord blood stem cells are more primitive, they have a lower rate of complications than with other stem cell transplants such as in bone marrow.

What disease can cord blood be used for?

There are more than 60 diseases that can now be helped through cord blood transplantation. These diseases include malignant and non-malignant conditions, such as blood cancers, rare inherited disorders of metabolism; immune diseases, and more. Treatment of these diseases using umbilical cord blood is not experimental. Cord blood transplantation has already helped thousands of people. There is ongoing research to find more diseases that can be helped by cord blood. While the research is still in the experimental stages, scientists are hopeful that one day cord blood transplantation will help in many heart, bone, liver, and brain diseases, even diseases like heart attack and stroke.

How is cord blood collected? Is it safe?

Collecting cord blood is completely safe for babies and mothers. It will not affect your baby's health or your birth experience because the blood is collected after your baby is born. The blood remaining in the umbilical cord is drained into a special collection bag and sent to the public or family cord blood bank you selected.

If you would like your baby's cord blood to be collected and stored for future use, you must make arrangements with either a public or family cord blood bank before the baby is born. When you contact a cord blood bank, they will send you information about cord blood collection and storage, forms to fill out, and a kit to take the hospital for your baby's birth.

What are the ways cord blood can be stored? What is the right decision for my family?

Types of Cord Blood Banks

Cord blood can be donated to a public cord blood bank for use by someone in need or stored at a family cord blood bank for your baby's or family's use. Donating your baby's cord blood or storing it for private use is a personal decision that you must make for yourself after discussion with your healthcare provider and after performing your own research. If you have a family member with leukemia or another disease that may be treatable by stem cell transplant, you should talk to their healthcare provider about the advisability of family cord blood banking, which would typically be performed under these circumstances without cost.

Public Cord Blood Banks

At this time, there are only two public cord blood banks in the United State available to accept cord blood donations from babies born in Arizona. They are: Cryobanks International (1-800-869-8608) and LifeBankUSA (1-877-543-3226). Public cord blood banks save and use cord blood for transplants to help people with one of the treatable diseases or for scientific research to learn more about the possible uses of cord blood. Transplants are anonymous and no information about you or your baby is given to the person receiving the cord blood. Donated cord blood becomes the property of the public cord blood bank. Before being accepted for donation, you will need to complete a health questionnaire to screen for genetic disorders and infectious diseases.

Family Cord Blood Banks

There are many family cord blood banks available for Arizona families who wish to save their baby's cord blood for potential future use. Using family cord blood banks, the family controls the use of the cord blood. Studies show there is less graft versus host disease complications and better survival rates when cord blood from a related source is transplanted. However, there is no guarantee that the saved cord blood will be able to be used in all situations. When making a decision about family cord blood banks, it is important to ask what the total cost is, how experienced the company is in cord blood banking, how experienced the company is in cord blood transplantation, if the company is financially sound, and what would happen if the company went out of business.

How much does it cost to donate or bank cord blood?

Donating cord blood to a public cord blood bank does not usually cost you any money. Ask your healthcare provider if there will be any charge to collect the blood. Family banking of cord blood for the baby's or family's future use usually costs between \$1,000 and \$2,000 at the time of the baby's birth. There will also be an annual storage fee of approximately \$100 to \$150.

