

Umbilical Cord Blood

What is umbilical cord blood?

It is your baby's blood that is left over in the placenta and umbilical cord after birth. It is usually thrown away, but scientists have found that it has stem cells that may help treat certain diseases.

How is it used?

It can be used for stem cell transplants to save the lives of children and some adults with certain types of cancers and other diseases. Stem cells in the umbilical cord blood can form new blood in the person who receives the transplant.

How is it donated and stored?

You may donate your child's umbilical cord blood to be used by any patient in need. Another option is to pay to have it stored for your own use. You may store it for free through the Related Cord Blood Donor Program if your baby has a sibling with a disease that can be treated with a stem cell transplant.

To save or donate your baby's cord blood, you will need to complete a simple health history form and have a small amount of your blood drawn when the baby is born. Women who donate their baby's cord blood to public banks must meet certain health criteria. For more information, go to <http://BeTheMatch.org/cord-eligibility>.

How is it collected?

Cord blood is collected after the baby is born. Collection is safe for babies and mothers. It is collected using a special kit and is usually done within 15 minutes of delivery. It is then sent to the cord blood bank for processing and storage. Cord blood collection may not be possible if an emergency occurs at the time of delivery. Talk to your doctor and, before 34 weeks' gestation, contact the umbilical cord blood bank you are going to use to request a collection kit.

Is it collected at my hospital?

More than 185 hospitals in the United States have trained collection teams to accept cord blood donations from healthy newborns. A list of these hospitals can be found at <http://BeTheMatch.org/donatecord>. Patients delivering at other hospitals may still be able to donate. They should contact one of the cord blood banks listed at <http://BeTheMatch.org/cord-otherhospitals>. Cord blood for private banks can be collected at any hospital.

How much does it cost?

There is no charge for donating cord blood to a public bank. Private banks charge an initial fee of \$495 to \$2,200. Most private banks also charge a storage fee, which usually costs about \$100 to \$150 a year.



Umbilical Cord Blood *(continued)*

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

National Marrow Donor Program

Web site: http://www.marrow.org/HELP/Donate_Cord_Blood_Share_Life/

Parent's Guide to Cord Blood Foundation

Web site: <http://www.parentsguidecordblood.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Web site: <http://bloodcell.transplant.hrsa.gov/CORD>

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Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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