

CORD BLOOD PRESERVATION

Cord blood banking or preservation is an elective practice that takes place at the time of delivery: following birth, the physician collects either blood from the umbilical cord and/or a portion of the umbilical cord for storage. Umbilical cord blood and tissue are rich sources of stem cells, which are the building blocks of our blood and immune systems. Research has shown that stem cells can be stored and used in the future treatment of diseases such as blood disorders, cancer, and bone marrow deficiencies. There is current investigation on whether these harvested stem cells can be used to treat conditions such as cerebral palsy, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

The decision to bank cord blood is a personal choice made by parents. Researching the topic is key and can be done with the help of your family and health care provider. Banking can provide peace of mind that if there be a need in the future, your family's stem cells will be readily available. However, there is a considerable cost for these services. Below you will find cord blood banking pearls.

How is cord blood and/or cord tissue collected?

Once you select a cord blood bank and enroll, a collection kit will be sent to your home. You will need to bring this collection kit with you to the hospital when you deliver your baby. After the baby is born, the umbilical cord is cleaned and a small needle that is connected to a pouch is introduced into the cord to collect the remaining blood. If parents decide to also store cord tissue, 4 to 8 inches of the cord is cut and placed in an appropriate container. Whether you have a cesarean section or a vaginal delivery, the collection process is the same, and is safe and pain-free for both mother and baby.

Is there a fee associated with cord blood preservation?

Yes. Cord blood companies charge a one-time fee ranging from \$1,800-\$2,100 and an annual storage fee of \$125. There are additional fees if you'd like to store cord tissue as well. Downtown Women also charges a one-time collection fee of \$250.

How is our cord blood/tissue transported to storage facility?

After delivery, you must call the cord blood preservation company. They will dispatch a courier service to come pick up the samples.

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

Parents have the option of either storing cord blood or tissue with a private facility or a public facility. Public banks accept donations to be used by anyone. When you donate cord blood to a public bank, you relinquish all rights to it and it may not be accessible in the future if you need it.

If you are interested in public banking you must register before 32-34 weeks. Currently, there are no public banking facilities in New York City. To find out more information about public banking, visit the National Marrow Donor Program website: www.marrows.org.

Private banks differ by storing the cord blood with link to the donor. This ensures that your family has access to it later if your baby (or other close relative) develops a serious condition that can be treated by stem cell transplant. For more information you can visit

Viacord www.viacord.com or CBR www.cordblood.com. Another online education resource is www.cordbankingbasics.com