

Cord Blood Banking—What Expectant Parents Need to Know

Your physicians at Sparks & Favor have prepared the following information to help our expectant families understand the potential benefits and possible consequences of cord blood banking. We neither recommend nor discourage this. We want our patients to base their choice on the principles of informed consent. **However, we do not consider the arrival at the hospital for the birth of your baby to be the ideal time to first hear about or begin considering this option.**

Our practice does not receive financial compensation for your donation to a public bank. If you choose a private bank, we are compensated for collection of cord blood.

What is cord blood?

This is blood collected from what remains in your baby's umbilical cord after it has been clamped, cut, and is no longer connected to your baby. It is blood from the baby's system, not the mother's blood.

For what purposes is cord blood collected?

Cord blood contains cells that can be transplanted into another individual to treat certain cancers, immune system diseases, and blood disorders like sickle-cell disease. It is also used in clinical trials to develop new therapies for other conditions. Cord blood transplants have similar uses as bone marrow transplants. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) states:

Families of all ethnicities and races should consider the societal benefit of public cord blood donation to increase the availability of matched cord blood units for people of all backgrounds.

[Read more](#) from ACOG. (If you are viewing the print version of this document, you can search *Cord Blood Donation* in the **About Women's Health** section of our website. Read further to learn about uses of donated cord blood that is not suitable for banking.

Does Brookwood offer the option to donate cord blood?

LifeCord Cord Blood Bank (a program run by LifeSouth Community Blood Banks Inc.) provides cord blood collection and public banking services for Brookwood patients. Patients can individually contract with private cord blood banking companies.

Will my donation help my child or another member of my family who develops one of these illnesses?

No. LifeCord Blood Bank is considered a **public** bank. You ***cannot direct your donation to a specific individual.***

As an alternative, **Private** cord blood banks charge an initiation fee and a maintenance fee (usually annual) to preserve donated cord blood for use as you, the donor, direct. This is rarely helpful because **an infant's cord blood cannot be used to treat genetic illnesses that child may develop since the child's blood cells carry the same genetic defect that caused the disease. It also cannot be used to treat a cancer that child may develop.** Rarely, privately banked blood may help a sibling of the donor child.

Does anyone else gain from my *public bank* donation?

In some case where a cord blood donation to a public bank cannot be used for medical treatment, it may be distributed for research or other purposes. These should be clearly stated on their consent form. If this is not on the consent form, you may wish to ask:

- Is my baby's cold blood sold for commercial purposes?
- Will my baby's cord blood be used to create **cell lines**? Cell lines are growing cultures of cells containing your baby's DNA (the material that forms human genes—the genetic code). Cell lines can be maintained indefinitely and used for scientific research.

Sparks & Favor PC has no information about the list of possible clients that may receive cord blood units for any purposes from either public or private cord blood banks. Neither can we provide a description of the possible end-uses of the cord blood you provide. The donor family does not receive any compensation for the cord blood regardless of how it is used.

Giving Informed Consent

- If you request *private cord blood banking*, you will sign an agreement directly with the blood bank you choose. **We are not participants in this agreement. We take no responsibility for the personal information the company may collect from you or tests that may be done on blood samples collected from you and the cord. We will only be collecting the cord blood at your request.**
- We hope that expectant mothers are unmedicated and not already in labor when deciding whether to sign a consent form for cord blood collection. While in labor your focus should not be distracted from your own needs. We hope you will review the informed consent documents before you come to the hospital. Reviewing a lengthy consent document or health questionnaire may be an unnecessary stress. **Once you have signed the written consent for donation to a public cord blood bank, and the cord blood is collected, you no longer have ownership of the donated cord blood.**
- If you choose donation to a **public cord blood bank**, you MAY be asked to provide a detailed health history. The form MAY ask for the health and genetic history of both mother and father, the mother's social history including questions about sexual or other behavioral risk factors, and other personal identifying information (PII) which may include the mother's social security number. **The consent you sign may allow the company to access to your medical records for this pregnancy and your baby's medical records. You should read it carefully.**
- Again, if you are considering donation, we recommend that you review the consent form, personal and health history forms before you arrive at the hospital. For public donation, you should contact LifeCord to request these forms. Your history and personal identifying information are kept on file. Some of this information may be shared with the transplant center or other organization that uses the tissue. We have no knowledge of the end-user's privacy practices. No patient who receives your donation will receive your personal identifying information, nor will you receive information about an individual who receives a tissue transplant. **We (Sparks & Favor PC) are not responsible for the security of health information you have shared or asked us to share with a third party.**
- If you donate cord blood, an extra mother's blood sample (not usually an extra needle stick) will be drawn with your admission bloodwork to test for conditions that determine whether your donation can be used. **It is possible that such a test or the later processing of the baby's cord blood will identify a genetic or other health problem of mother or baby that would not otherwise have been known.** Early awareness of a treatable health problem is beneficial. However, some have expressed concern about advance knowledge of genetic conditions for which no medical cure is available. Such knowledge may have emotional as well as practical consequences. HIPAA prohibits sharing of your personal information with third parties you have not authorized to receive it. Nonetheless, some individuals have expressed concern that knowledge of a genetic risk could affect their ability to truthfully apply for future insurance coverage (ex. life or disability insurance). **Before you give your written consent for donation, you should consider whether you would want to know this information.**

- Certain conditions—for example, sexually transmitted diseases—must be reported directly to state health officials.
- **The company that accepts your donation is solely responsible for notification of any test results. We do not accept *any responsibility* for notifying patients of any results of tests performed on the cord blood sample, mother's sample, or any other issue related to your cord blood collection.** Since we have not ordered any testing, nor entered lab test requests into our electronic medical records system, we do not track and report such test results.

We realize that this is a large amount of information, and some of the medical issues may be confusing. We are happy to answer your questions about cord blood donation.