

# Cord blood banking: is it right for you?

By Brenda Silva

Among the decisions facing expectant parents is one that involves cord blood banking, a procedure that takes only minutes to perform and could potentially serve as a lifesaving option later in life for their children. However, just as the cord blood banking trend has risen, so have questions about whether or not the procedure is the best choice for individual families and what parents should know before making a decision. Although there is plenty of information available, many parents believe their decision to bank cord blood is the medical equivalent to saving for a rainy day.

Cord blood banking is the collection of approximately two ounces of the blood that remains in the umbilical cord once it's been cut. This cord blood ends up in one of three locations: stored in a private blood bank per the parents' arrangements; donated to a public cord blood bank for use by anonymous patients; or discarded by the hospital/birthing center along with post-birth medical waste. The primary issue for expectant parents is to decide if they want to keep their child's cord blood at all, and what would they use it for.

Cord blood contains medically valuable stem cells, which have the potential for use in treating many life-threatening diseases. Newborn stem cells are being used to fight against diseases such as cancer, as well as blood, immune, and metabolic disorders. However, there is no scientific data to support cord blood banking at this time as much research needs to be done.

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Specifically, there is no hard evidence of the safety or effectiveness of stem cell transplantation for the treatment of certain cancers and other diseases, only the hope that future research will lead to cures. There are also no accurate estimates of the likelihood of children to need their own stored cord blood stem cells in the future. The range of available estimates is from 1 in 1000 to more than 1 in 200,000. Although not standard of care, many doctors do agree that cord blood banking should be encouraged when there is knowledge of a sibling with a medical condition (malignant or genetic) that could potentially benefit from stem cell transplantation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend routine banking of cord blood. Their policy specifically states:

*“Cord blood donation should be discouraged when cord blood stored in a bank is to be directed for later personal or family use, because most conditions that might be helped by cord blood stem cells already exist in the infant's cord blood.”*

If you do decide to bank your baby's cord blood, it is important to consider the considerable cost. The initial fee for storing cord blood can run between \$1,000 and \$2,000, with an additional monthly fee of \$100-\$150. Ultimately, all expectant parents who are interested in cord blood banking should talk with their physician before making a final decision that will affect their family medically and financially for many years to come.

## TAKE AWAYS

- Collecting cord blood is a simple, painless procedure that only takes minutes after birth.
- Blood collected can be stored in a public or private facility, or it will be discarded.
- Family medical history plays a role when considering cord blood banking.
- Cord blood banking can be costly, and is considered an important financial decision.

## REFERENCES

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. [Cord Blood Banking for Potential Future Transplantation.](#)
2. The American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecologists. [Umbilical Cord Blood Banking.](#)
3. Cord Blood Registry. [Cord Blood Stem Cells Banking Basics.](#)
4. Kids Health. [Cord Blood Banking.](#)
5. [Parent's Guide to Cord Blood.](#)
6. American Pregnancy Association. [Cord Blood Banking.](#)



## Gun safety and toddlers

By Brenda Silva

Gun safety should be a priority in any home that has both children and firearms. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the rate of firearm deaths among children younger than 13 in the US remains twenty-five times higher than the other top twenty-five industrialized nations combined.

Whether or not you keep a gun in your home is a personal decision, but ultimately parents and caregivers are responsible to keep their children and other children who visit the home safe from firearm-related injuries. In a statement entitled "Firearm-related injuries affecting the pediatric population," the American Academy of Pediatrics states: "The absence of guns from children's homes and communities is the most reliable and effective measure to prevent firearm-related injuries in children and adolescents." The statement goes on to say that parental education is the most important factor in preventing firearm accidents in the home.

While it's never safe for a child to have access to a firearm, even unloaded, there are steps you should take to reduce the risk of an accidental discharge that results in injury. Accidental shootings at home are often the result of handguns left loaded, unsecured, and easy for curious hands to find. Parents who choose to have a handgun in the home should invest in a secure, lockable gun safe for firearm storage. Guns should be outfitted with trigger locks, which make it difficult for little fingers to discharge the weapon. Guns should never be stored loaded, and the ammunition should be stored separately and locked.



**Parents who choose to have a handgun in the home should invest in a secure, lockable gun safe for firearm storage. ”**

Because young children will inevitably be exposed to images of guns, firearm education is necessary to ensure your child's safety even if your home doesn't have firearms. Once the child is older, parents can decide if the child is mature enough to handle more information and education about the reality of gun usage. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends discussing gun safety at well-child exams so your child's doctor may inquire about guns in your home.

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### TAKE AWAYS

- Television, movies, and video games expose children to guns and gun violence.
- Children are naturally curious about guns.
- Guns should be equipped with trigger locks and stored locked and unloaded with ammunition stored and locked separately.
- Firearm safety should be taught to all children, even those from homes with no guns.