

Each month, *Arizona Parenting* contacts experts to respond to readers' questions with helpful suggestions and information.

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Q: Claire from Chandler asks, "I am six months pregnant and my doctor has mentioned cord blood storage or donation. What is the difference between the two and what are the benefits of banking my baby's cord blood?"

A: Claire, expectant mothers have three choices when deciding what to do with their baby's umbilical cord blood: privately bank it, donate it, or throw it away. With all of the amazing scientific discoveries and breakthroughs using stem cells, as a community we hope that no expectant mother will ever throw away the precious cord blood. Bone marrow stem cells are very similar to umbilical cord blood stem cells, so the scientific community has great interest in advancing medical research in this area. Stem cells are currently being investigated to treat several conditions such as: leukemia, cancers, sickle cell disease, brain injury,

spinal cord injury, tissue regeneration, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, type 1 diabetes, and heart disease to name just a few. There are hundreds of ongoing clinical trials using stem cells that may offer hope to patients with a life threatening disease. Visit www.clinicaltrials.gov to learn more about current treatments using umbilical cord blood stem cells.

Private banking, also known as "family banking" can be a useful option for families to consider. To utilize a private cord blood bank, the family would pay to have the cord blood stored would have exclusive rights to the cord blood stem cells to use for potential future cellular therapies. These stem cells are a perfect genetic match for the baby and increase the likelihood of having a genetic match for a sibling or other member of the family. The price to private store your baby's cord blood is approximately \$2,000 for initial processing, plus an annual storage fee of about \$100-\$150 per year. Prices may vary from one cord blood bank to another. Some clinical trials require the patient to have their own "autologous" cord blood stem cells in order to participate in the study and receive stem cell therapy.

The public donation bank is designed to allow expectant mothers to let their baby's cord blood be available to the medical community around the world for patient therapy. Many families

are limited with their financial resources in our economic environment, so they are unable to afford to privately bank their baby's umbilical cord blood. They may not realize that they are able to donate their cord blood for free. These stem cells can potentially help save someone's life. If the family decides to donate the baby's cord blood, then they no longer have exclusive rights to the cord blood, but if it has not already been used for transplant, it might still be available to the donor. The donated cord blood is processed, cryogenically preserved, genetically cataloged and available to doctors to treat patients, to be used in clinical trials, or for medical research. The preserved stem cells will remain viable for several years.

Arizona now has a cord blood bank that offers free public donation, as well as private family banking. Celebration Stem Cell Centre is Arizona's first private and public cord blood donation bank. The donation option is free, safe for mother and baby, and doesn't interfere with the delivery. Donations are especially needed from ethnic communities such as: African American, American Indian, Asian, Latino and mixed ethnicities. Mothers can enroll online at www.CelebrationStemCellCentre.com to donate or privately bank their baby's cord blood.

Every life is precious! Privately bank or donate your baby's cord blood, just don't throw it away. ■

Email questions to todd.fischer@azparenting.com; fax to 602.279.7978; mail to 4848 E. Cactus Rd., Ste 110, Scottsdale, AZ 85254. Include phone, email, name and city in which you reside. Submissions are consent to publish name and question. Phone number, email address, etc., remain confidential.