

Umbilical Cord Blood Donation

Pregnant women sometimes have questions or concerns regarding umbilical cord blood donation. Some want to know whether it is worthwhile to “bank” their infant’s umbilical cord blood for the benefit of a family member who might need the umbilical stem cells for future treatment of their MS. Other women are asking whether their infant’s cord blood might be used to benefit MS research. The following points have been identified through investigation of this topic.

- Research is being conducted using cord blood cells to analyze immune response and other factors that may eventually shed light on causes and treatment of MS. However, at present there is no treatment available involving cord blood cells, nor do we know of any sites that are looking for cord blood specifically for MS research.
- Bone marrow transplantation, also called hemopoietic stem cell transplantation, is under investigation for the treatment of severe forms of multiple sclerosis. The long-term benefits of this experimental procedure have not yet been established. In this procedure, the individual receives grafts of his or her own blood stem cells, and thus donor stem cells are not used or needed.
- However, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Marrow Donor Program both strongly encourage umbilical cord donations for general research purposes. Donors are encouraged to contact a cord blood bank by the 35th week of pregnancy. Umbilical cord blood is being studied for potential use in a wide variety of life-threatening diseases because it is a rich source of blood stem cells. Transplantation of blood stem cells from umbilical cords has been used successfully to treat several pediatric blood diseases, including sickle cell anemia, and cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma. At this time the procedure is still considered investigational. There is currently no solid evidence that umbilical cord blood stem cells have the ability to be transformed into other types of cells, such as replacement nerve tissue or myelin-making cells.
- The procedure for obtaining the cord blood involves clamping the umbilical cord at the time of birth. The small amount of blood remaining in the umbilical cord is drained and taken to a cord blood bank. It is free to donate. If you are interested you can contact the National Marrow Donor Program at www.marrows.org for a list of sites.
- The second question concerns “storing” the newborn’s cord blood for the child’s future use or a family member’s future use. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Marrow Donor Program have issued a policy statement about cord blood banking for future transplantation. They state, “...private storage of cord blood... is unwise.” For information on this policy statement see: www.aap.org/policy/re9860.html. Particularly, for individuals with MS, for whom there is no available research on the benefits of umbilical stem cell transplantation, banking is discouraged.

National Marrow Donor Program

Suite 500
3001 Broadway Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413-1753
General Information: 1-800-MARROW2 (1-800-627-7692)
Office of Patient Advocacy: 1-888-999-6743

American Academy of Pediatrics

141 Northwest Point Boulevard
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098
Tel: (847) 434-4000

Tissue Bank

Rocky Mountain MS Center
701 E. Hampden Ave. #420
Englewood, CO 80113-2760
Tel: (303) 649-6602

See also...

Sourcebook

- Research
- Tissue Donors

Society Web Resources

- MS and Pregnancy
www.nationalmssociety.org/Pregnancy
- Research
www.nationalmssociety.org/Research
- Research Fact Sheet
www.nationalmssociety.org/ResearchFactSheet
- Research FAQs
www.nationalmssociety.org/ResearchFAQ

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is proud to be a source of information about multiple sclerosis. Our comments are based on professional advice, published experience, and expert opinion, but do not represent individual therapeutic recommendations or prescription. For specific information and advice, consult your personal physician.

To contact your chapter, call **1-800-FIGHT-MS** (1-800-344-4867) or visit the National MS Society web site: www.nationalmssociety.org.