

Dear Physician;

Norton Healthcare began the Family Link program, a private storage facility, in 1998 for storage of umbilical cord blood from a newborn infant. This program allows hematopoietic stem cells from umbilical cord blood to be cryopreserved in the vapor phase of liquid nitrogen and stored in the event that it is needed at a later time by the child or by his/her siblings (who have a 25% chance of being a match with the newborn).

The collection process is generally painless with no known risks to the mother or child. The collection does not interfere with the birth process or the bonding between mother and child afterwards. The cord blood harvest is a simple procedure. Once the child is delivered, the umbilical vein is cannulated with a needle from a FDA approved cord blood collection bag. The umbilical cord blood is collected by gravity drainage and by the force of uterine contractions on the placenta. These umbilical cord blood cells may provide a source of hematopoietic stem cells for a child or adult in the event that a bone marrow transplant is required.

When no other family member matches, the process of finding an unrelated bone marrow donor can be very difficult, expensive and frustrating. At any given time, there is an average of 3,000 patients searching for a compatible bone marrow donor in the National Marrow Donor Program Registry. In addition, there is a risk of graft vs. host disease, a reaction in which the transplanted cells attack the recipient. With stem cells collected from cord blood, the likelihood of this adverse reaction is decreased when compared to bone marrow or peripheral blood stem cells. Umbilical cord blood transplantation research continues with goals to further identify cellular characteristics of umbilical cord blood and its potential medical usefulness.

The decision to store umbilical cord blood is a personal one for each family. Considerations should include a family history of cancer and/or other diseases treatable by stem cell transplantation. There is a one time cost for processing a cord blood and an annual fee for storage.

I have enclosed some information for your review. Also, a CPT code for cord blood collection is available, S2140. I am ready to answer any specific questions for you at any time. Additional information can be found on our website at www.nortonhealthcare.com/familylink.

Sincerely,



William T. Tse, MD, PhD
Family Link Cord Blood Storage Program
Blood & Marrow Transplant
Medical Director