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What is umbilical cord blood?

Cord blood is the blood left in the umbilical cord after birth. It contains stem cells. These cells have the amazing ability to grow into many different kinds of cells, like bone marrow cells, blood cells, or brain cells. This can make them valuable for treating some diseases.

Diseases that can be treated with stem cell transplants include leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, and some types of anemia. When healthy stem cells are transplanted into a child who is ill, those cells can grow new bone marrow cells to replace the ones destroyed by the disease or its treatment. Stem cells from the child's own cord blood often cannot be used, because they may have led to the disease in the first place.



Much research is being done to see if stem cells can be used to treat more problems. For now, though, treatment is limited to diseases that affect blood cells.

What is cord blood banking?

The umbilical cord is usually thrown away after birth. But the blood inside the cord can be saved, or banked, for possible later use. The blood is drawn from the umbilical cord after the cord has been clamped and cut. Cord blood banks freeze the cord blood for storage.

Private cord blood banks have collected hundreds of thousands of cord blood units. But the blood has been used in only a small number of transplants. Most transplants of cord blood stem cells use cord blood donated by others to public banks.

To get more information, you can visit these websites:

www.parentsguidecordblood.org

www.cordbloodbankingguide.com

You can also call the Ruth York Morgan Health Education Learning Place at The Washington Hospital at (724) 250-4310.