Should I store or donate my babyâ??s cord blood?

Description

This is a follow-up post to my previous article here on whether cord blood banking is necessary, and one that has been highly requested by many of you who canâ??t decide whether to donate or store your babyâ??s cord blood privately.

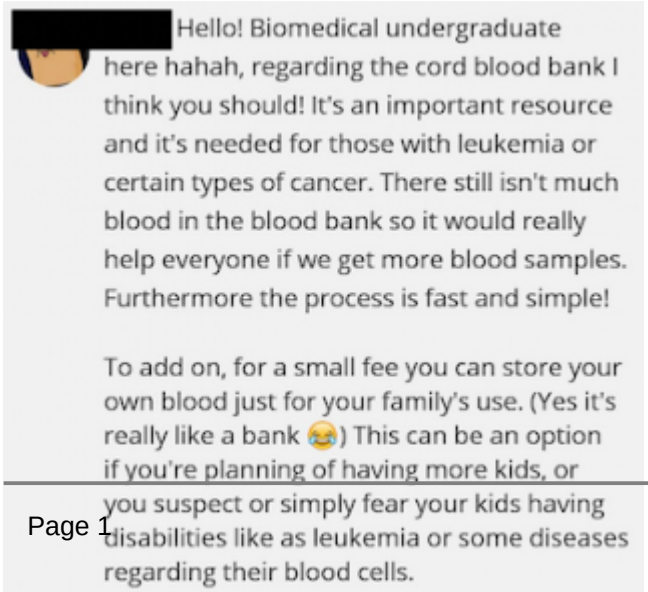
(Please donâ??t ever discard it â?? it is a huge waste of resources that could have otherwise been used to save someone elseâ??s life or even just to do further clinical research on.)



Image credits

This is a pretty debatable issue and thereâ??s a wide range of opinions on this topic. While my gynae encouraged it, Iâ??ve also heard from readers who believe that itâ??ll be better to donate rather than to pay a fee to store oneâ??s baby cord blood privately.

Feeling lost, I turned to the ever-supportive community of mummies on Dayre (#dayremummies), and sought their advice on what they had chosen to do for their child(ren) when they were born. Some said they banked it privately (most mentioned they did it with Cordlife), but a significant number also told me that they chose to donate their babyâ??s cord blood to the public bank, Singapore Cord Blood Bank (SCBB).

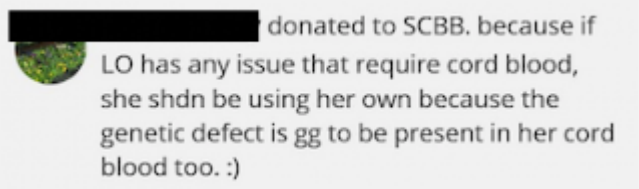

[redacted] Hello! Biomedical undergraduate here hahah, regarding the cord blood bank I think you should! It's an important resource and it's needed for those with leukemia or certain types of cancer. There still isn't much blood in the blood bank so it would really help everyone if we get more blood samples. Furthermore the process is fast and simple!

To add on, for a small fee you can store your own blood just for your family's use. (Yes it's really like a bank 😂) This can be an option if you're planning of having more kids, or you suspect or simply fear your kids having disabilities like as leukemia or some diseases regarding their blood cells.

There is basically **no charge to donors** for the collection and banking of cord blood with SCBB (so you donâ??t have to foot a single cent for the processing and cryopreservation), but as a result, **it will be publicly available and no longer the property of the parents or the child.**

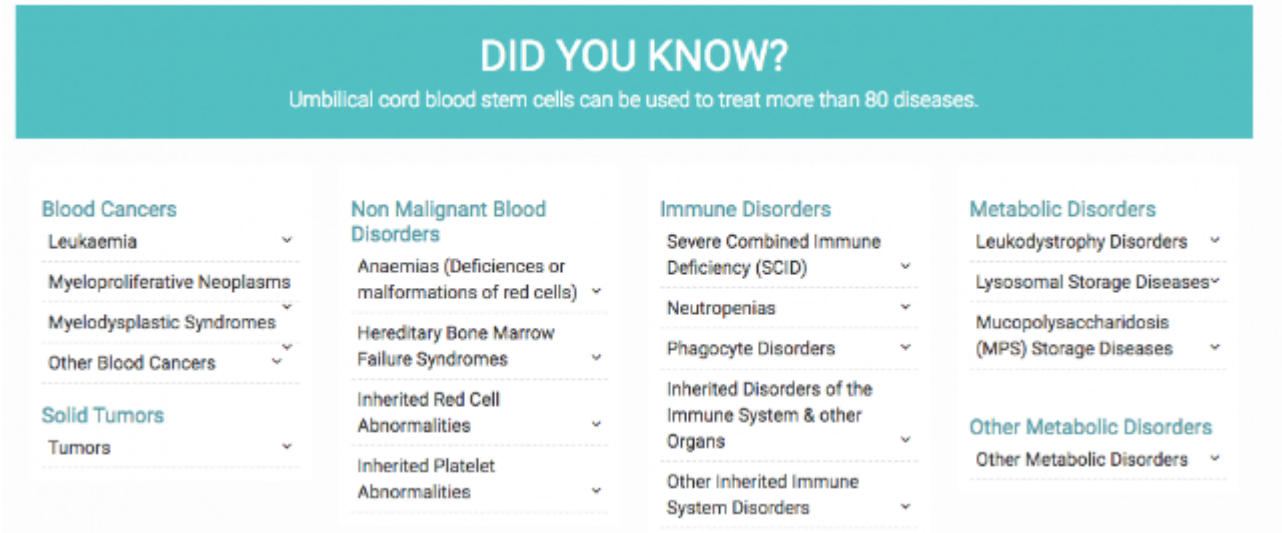
The reasons many mummies gave for preferring to donate (instead of storing it privately) were:

1. If your child develops a genetic disease, it is unlikely that you can use the cord blood cells anyway since those stem cells will also contain the same genetic defect.



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This is somewhat true, but not all conditions that can be treated with hematopoietic stem cells are due to genetic reasons. For instance, while some diseases may indeed be inherited, not all cases are due to genetic disorders either even for the same type of disease (such as leukemia and lupus, etc). Hereâ??s some cases locally in Singapore where the childâ??s own cord stem cells, stored at birth, came into usefulness for treatment later despite him being born with cerebral palsy. Internationally, there are more of such cases, including here (acquired brain injury from a fall), here (autism) and here (neuroblastoma) .

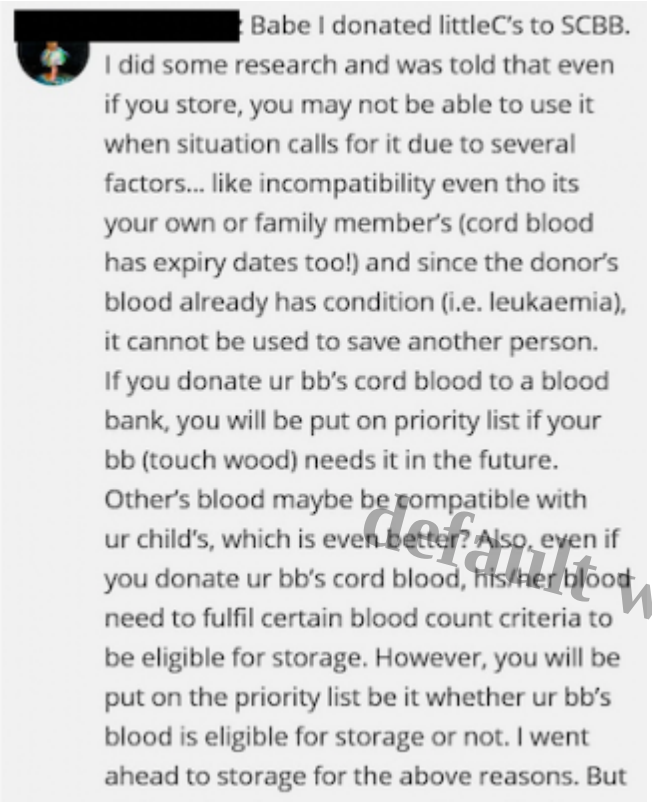


Source: Cordlife website

2. If your sample is not used by anyone else, it will be stored without you having to pay anything and youâ??ll be put on the priority list to use it later if your need arises.

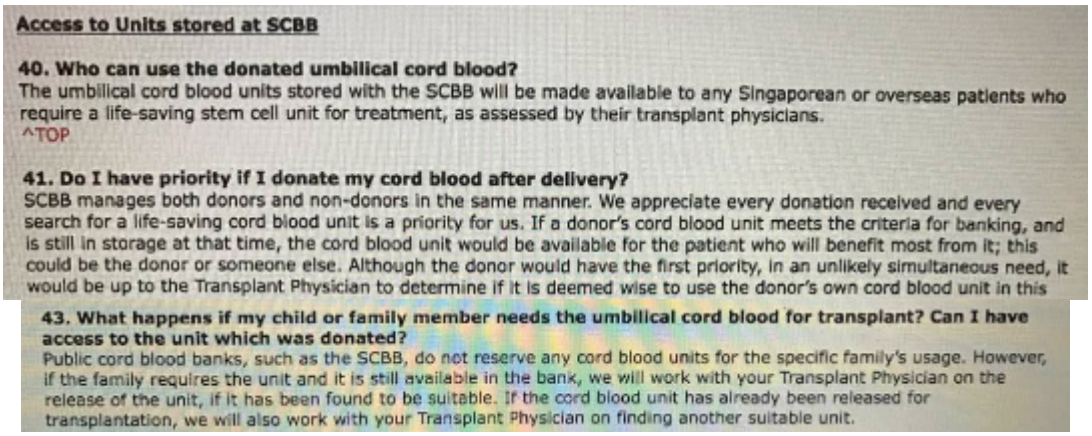
Although this is true, the problem is that there is no guarantee your cord blood stem cells will still be there when you need it, as no one knows what the future holds. The public bank is open to patients not

just in Singapore, but those all around the world who are searching for a match as well. There is therefore no assurance that your cord blood unit will still be there for your family when you need it.



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But take a look at this:



â??SCBB manages both donors and non-donors in the same manner. If a donorâ??s cord blood unit is still in storage at that time, it will be available for the patient who benefits most from it; this could be the donor or someone else.â?•

â??Public cord blood banks, such as the SCBB, do not reserve any cord blood units for the specific familyâ??s usage.â?•

And because SCBB doesnâ??t tell you whether your sample was viable for donation and storage, many parents might just be living under the false impression that their babyâ??s cord blood is still in the public blood, only to find out much later that it was discarded years ago. I asked some of the mummies who told me they had donated their babyâ??s cord blood to help me check if their sample was successfully accepted and still there, and these were the results:





As you can see, it seems like majority werenâ??t successful, therefore reaffirming my belief that it might be better to store privately instead of having it go to naught like this.

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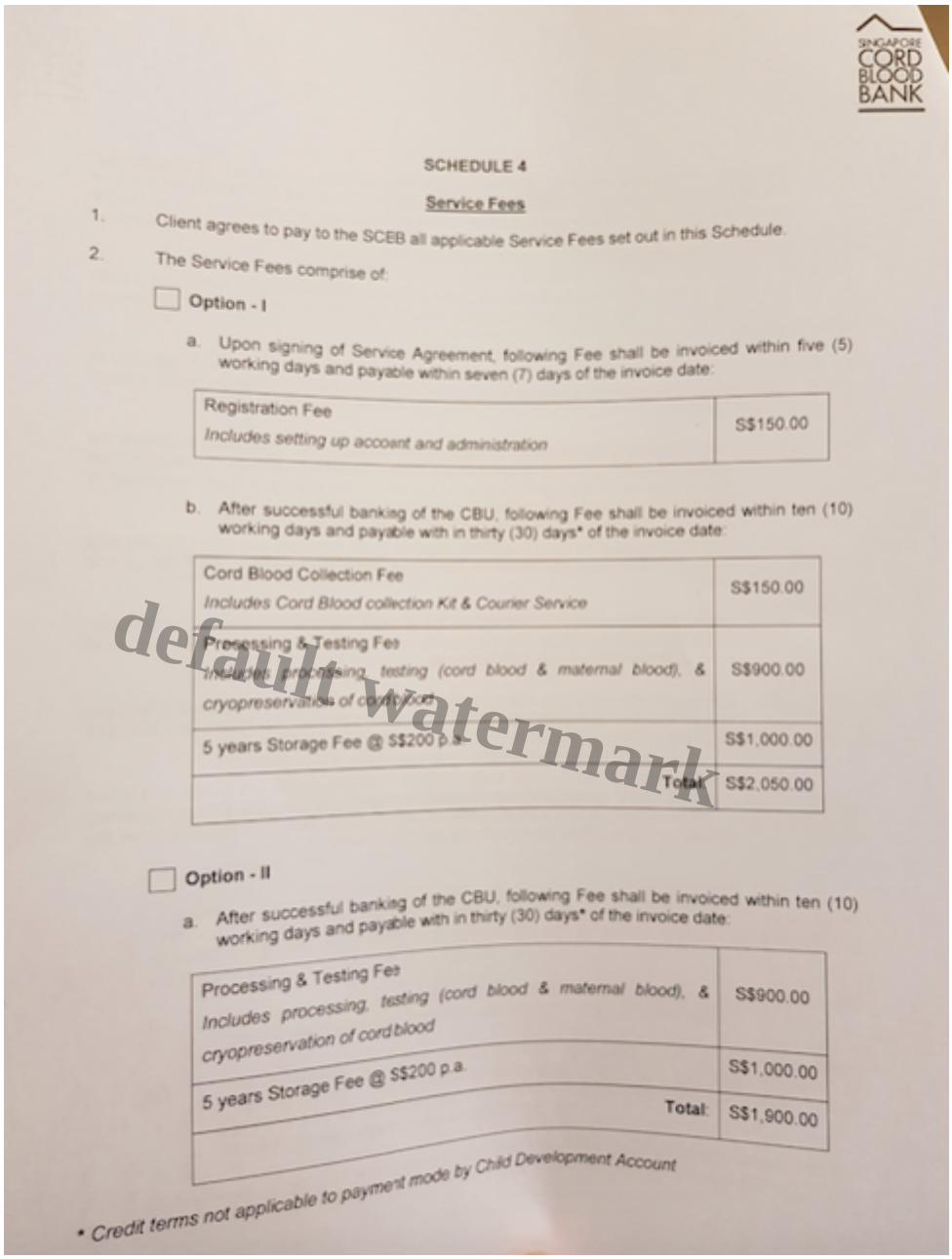
3. If your sample is not viable for storage, you can also opt for SCBBâ??s conversion program for family banking and store it privately.

This is a fairly new initiative launched by SCBB (in Feb 2018), so it wasnâ??t available to parents who donated their newbornâ??s cord blood previously.

Basically, SCBB has relatively high requirements â?? for a viable donor sample to be accepted, it needs to contain at least 1.3 billion hematopoietic stem cells. However, if the cell count falls short and your babyâ??s cord blood gets rejected, you can also opt for their conversion program where you store it in their family bank. The minimum for this private storage will then be 400 million stem cells.

Costs wise, we spoke with SCBB and were told that itâ??ll cost us $1,900 for the first 5 years, and $1,000 for every 5-year block thereafter. In other words, **itâ??ll cost $4,900 if we wish to store with SCBB for 20 years, which works out to be pretty much the same as what itâ??ll cost us to bank with one of the private banks right from the start**.

(Iâ??m also in the midst of doing up a comparison table between all the three local private banks â?? Cordlife, Stemcord and Cryoviva â?? and will share that shortly once Iâ??m done.)



SINGAPORE CORD BLOOD BANK

SCHEDULE 4

Service Fees

1. Client agrees to pay to the SCEB all applicable Service Fees set out in this Schedule.
2. The Service Fees comprise of:

☐ **Option - I**

a. Upon signing of Service Agreement, following Fee shall be invoiced within five (5) working days and payable within seven (7) days of the invoice date:

Registration Fee *Includes setting up account and administration*	S$150.00

b. After successful banking of the CBU, following Fee shall be invoiced within ten (10) working days and payable with in thirty (30) days* of the invoice date:

Cord Blood Collection Fee *Includes Cord Blood collection Kit & Courier Service*	S$150.00
Processing & Testing Fee *Includes processing, testing (cord blood & maternal blood), & cryopreservation of cord blood*	S$900.00
5 years Storage Fee @ S$200 p.a.	S$1,000.00
Total:	S$2,050.00

☐ **Option - II**

a. After successful banking of the CBU, following Fee shall be invoiced within ten (10) working days and payable with in thirty (30) days* of the invoice date:

Processing & Testing Fee *Includes processing, testing (cord blood & maternal blood), & cryopreservation of cord blood*	S$900.00
5 years Storage Fee @ S$200 p.a.	S$1,000.00
Total:	S$1,900.00

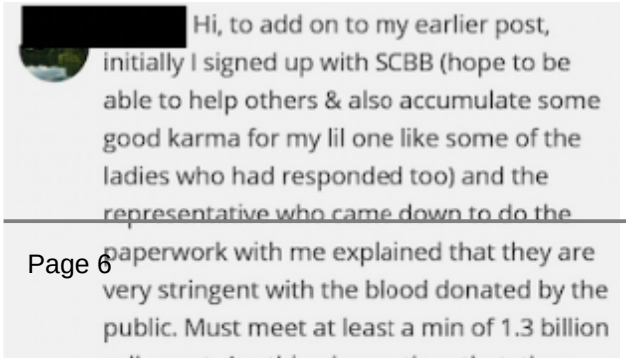
• Credit terms not applicable to payment mode by Child Development Account

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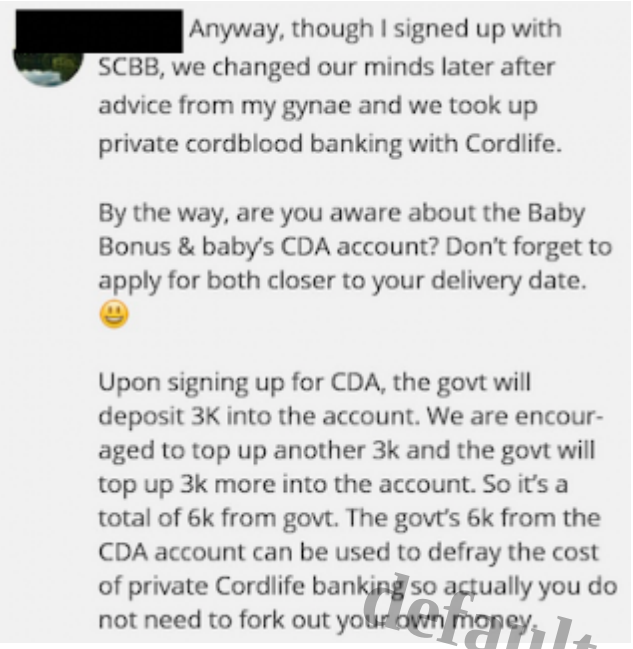
Costs verified again with SCBB by another reader, shortly after I spoke with them.

Another question that I had was : **is it still feasible for me to do delayed cord clamping if I donate the cord blood?**

When I asked the SCBB representative as to whether delayed cord clamping could still be done in tandem with cord blood collection, she said no, as it reduces the blood volume and therefore the number of stem cells left is unlikely to be viable for donation (1.3 billion cells) and/or storage. However, the private banks told me differently, as their requirements are much lower in terms of the cell count (200 million minimum).



[redacted] Hi, to add on to my earlier post, initially I signed up with SCBB (hope to be able to help others & also accumulate some good karma for my lil one like some of the ladies who had responded too) and the representative who came down to do the paperwork with me explained that they are very stringent with the blood donated by the public. Must meet at least a min of 1.3 billion



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At the end of the day, whether one makes the decision to donate to a public cord blood bank or to store for oneâ??s private usage in the future is very much a personal choice. Aside from the reasons listed above, I see two other very compelling factors for private banking instead:

- **Minority groups (or those who are ethnically-mixed) have a much lower chance of finding a suitable match through public cord blood banks.**
- **Private cord blood banking isnâ??t that expensive vs. the cost of procuring a suitable sample from the public / worldwide database (up to $65,000!!!)**

Therefore, if the price tag isnâ??t too hefty for me to store it privately, Iâ??d rather be guaranteed of an option for my child and my family instead of relying on the odds in the public bank, where the odds of a match is much lower. Iâ??m currently finishing up my comparison table between the three private banks, and will share that in a subsequent post once Iâ??m done verifying the data and facts.

At just $5,000 to store my babyâ??s cord blood till they reach age 21 (or just under $20 a month), I honestly think thatâ??s a small price to pay for a form of insurance that not only protects, but can potentially even treat or cure the condition.

Name me any other insurance policy that does that!

With love,
Budget Babe

Category

1. Family
2. Pregnancy