

Should I store or donate my baby'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 can't decide whether to donate or store your baby's cord blood privately.

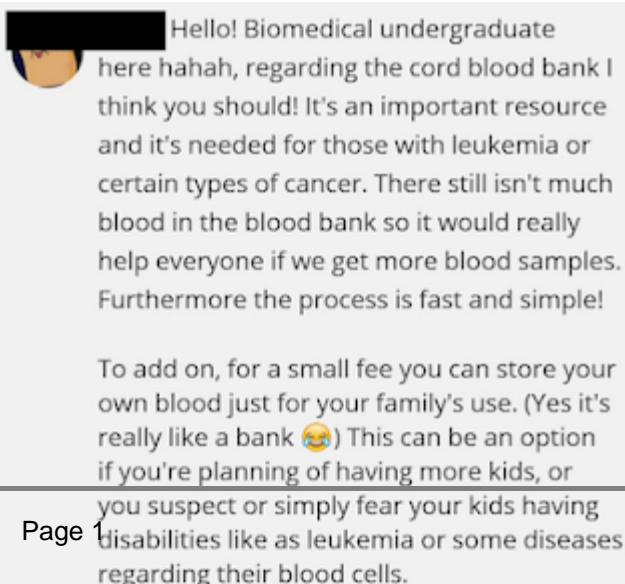
(Please don't ever discard it – it is a huge waste of resources that could have otherwise been used to save someone else's life or even just to do further clinical research on.)



[Image credits](#)

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

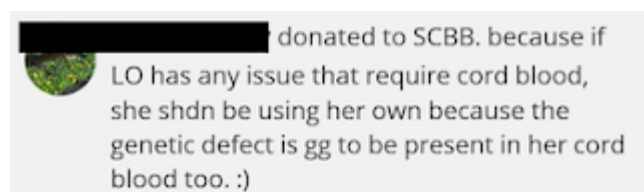
Feeling lost, I turned to the ever-supportive community of mummies on Dayre (#dayremummies), and sought their advice on what they had chosen to do for their child(ren) when they were born. Some said they banked it privately (most mentioned they did it with Cordlife), but a significant number also told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



There is basically **no charge to donors** for the collection and banking of cord blood with SCBB (so you don'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.



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). [Here's some cases locally in Singapore where the child'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 \(neuroblastoma\)](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

Umbilical cord blood stem cells can be used to treat more than 80 diseases.

Blood Cancers	Non Malignant Blood Disorders	Immune Disorders	Metabolic Disorders
Leukaemia ▾	Anaemias (Deficiencies or malformations of red cells) ▾	Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID) ▾	Leukodystrophy Disorders ▾
Myeloproliferative Neoplasms ▾	Hereditary Bone Marrow Failure Syndromes ▾	Neutropenias ▾	Lysosomal Storage Diseases ▾
Myelodysplastic Syndromes ▾	Inherited Red Cell Abnormalities ▾	Phagocyte Disorders ▾	Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) Storage Diseases ▾
Other Blood Cancers ▾	Inherited Platelet Abnormalities ▾	Inherited Disorders of the Immune System & other Organs ▾	Other Metabolic Disorders ▾
Solid Tumors		Other Inherited Immune System Disorders ▾	
Tumors ▾			

Source: Cordlife website

2. If your sample is not used by anyone else, it will be stored without you having to pay anything and you'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.



Babe I donated littleC's to SCBB.

I did some research and was told that even if you store, you may not be able to use it when situation calls for it due to several factors... like incompatibility even tho its your own or family member's (cord blood has expiry dates too!) and since the donor's blood already has condition (i.e. leukaemia), it cannot be used to save another person. If you donate ur bb's cord blood to a blood bank, you will be put on priority list if your bb (touch wood) needs it in the future. Other's blood maybe be compatible with ur child's, which is even better? Also, even if you donate ur bb's cord blood, his/her blood need to fulfil certain blood count criteria to be eligible for storage. However, you will be put on the priority list be it whether ur bb's blood is eligible for storage or not. I went ahead to storage for the above reasons. But

But take a look at this:

Access to Units stored at SCBB

40. Who can use the donated umbilical cord blood?
The umbilical cord blood units stored with the SCBB will be made available to any Singaporean or overseas patients who require a life-saving stem cell unit for treatment, as assessed by their transplant physicians.
[^TOP](#)

41. Do I have priority if I donate my cord blood after delivery?
SCBB manages both donors and non-donors in the same manner. We appreciate every donation received and every search for a life-saving cord blood unit is a priority for us. If a donor's cord blood unit meets the criteria for banking, and is still in storage at that time, the cord blood unit would be available for the patient who will benefit most from it; this could be the donor or someone else. Although the donor would have the first priority, in an unlikely simultaneous need, it would be up to the Transplant Physician to determine if it is deemed wise to use the donor's own cord blood unit in this

43. What happens if my child or family member needs the umbilical cord blood for transplant? Can I have access to the unit which was donated?
Public cord blood banks, such as the SCBB, do not reserve any cord blood units for the specific family's usage. However, if the family requires the unit and it is still available in the bank, we will work with your Transplant Physician on the release of the unit, if it has been found to be suitable. If the cord blood unit has already been released for transplantation, we will also work with your Transplant Physician on finding another suitable unit.


“SCBB manages both donors and non-donors in the same manner. If a donor'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.”


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And because SCBB doesn't tell you whether your sample was viable for donation and storage, many parents might just be living under the false impression that their baby'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

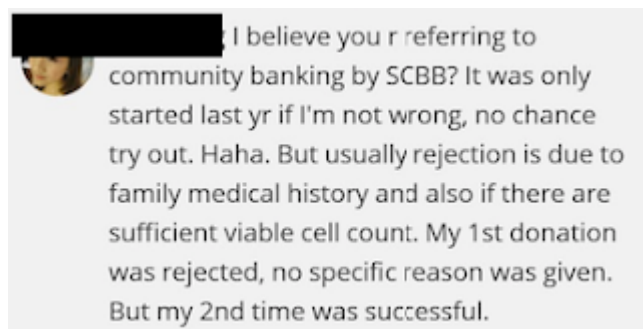
told me they had donated their baby's cord blood to help me check if their sample was successfully accepted and still there, and these were the results:

Updates on donation of littleC's cord blood to SCBB. I called to check on the status of the banking, sadly, they couldn't bank it successfully due to the lack of the minimum blood cells. @sgbudgetbabe fyi. But this is kinda expected too lah, I hv early aging of placenta, not quite enough blood for bb in my placenta in the first place, hence the early induced labour, not to mention storing/donating. Well, okay lah, at least I tried. It was too wasteful to me to just dispose without even trying.

 @sgbudgetbabe mine's rejected :(as was my friend's, no specific reason given. they just directed me to a list of possible reasons. but well, i tell myself i've tried :)

 Yes SCBB explained to me that sadly majority of the cord bloods are rejected, I still wanna give a try since I am not storing then why not just donate to help others? I had early calcification of placenta, so I consulted my gynea if I still have enough blood to donate or not, he said "we try" haha... Well, with rdgs to whether SCBB managed to store my bb's cord blood, I did not call and check! They normally won't call or inform you about the status, you need to ask. Let me call them tmr and I will write about it once I get some updates 😊

 My baby's cord blood donation did not meet the donation criteria, so it'll be discarded. If want to store for personal use for baby in future, it can be done for a fee.



As you can see, it seems like majority weren't successful, therefore reaffirming my belief that it might be better to store privately instead of having it go to naught like this.


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

This is a fairly [new initiative launched by SCBB \(in Feb 2018\)](#), so it wasn't available to parents who donated their newborn's cord blood previously.

Basically, SCBB has relatively high requirements – 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 baby'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 it'll cost us \$1,900 for the first 5 years, and \$1,000 for every 5-year block thereafter. In other words, **it'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 it'll cost us to bank with one of the private banks right from the start.**

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



SCHEDULE 4
Service Fees

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

☐ **Option - I**
 - 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 <i>Includes setting up account and administration</i>	S\$150.00
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 - 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 <i>Includes Cord Blood collection Kit & Courier Service</i>	S\$150.00
Processing & Testing Fee <i>Includes processing, testing (cord blood & maternal blood), & cryopreservation of cord blood</i>	S\$900.00
5 years Storage Fee @ S\$200 p.a.	S\$1,000.00
Total:	S\$2,050.00

☐ **Option - II**
 - 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 <i>Includes processing, testing (cord blood & maternal blood), & cryopreservation of cord blood</i>	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 made by Child Development Account

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).

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

 Anyway, though I signed up with SCBB, we changed our minds later after advice from my gynae and we took up private cordblood banking with Cordlife.

By the way, are you aware about the Baby Bonus & baby's CDA account? Don't forget to apply for both closer to your delivery date. 😊

Upon signing up for CDA, the govt will deposit 3K into the account. We are encouraged to top up another 3k and the govt will top up 3k more into the account. So it's a total of 6k from govt. The govt's 6k from the CDA account can be used to defray the cost of private Cordlife banking so actually you do not need to fork out your own money.

At the end of the day, whether one makes the decision to donate to a public cord blood bank or to store for one'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 isn'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 isn't too hefty for me to store it privately, I'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. I'm currently finishing up my comparison table between the three private banks, and will share that in a subsequent post once I'm done verifying the data and facts.

At just \$5,000 to store my baby's cord blood till they reach age 21 (or just under \$20 a month), I honestly think that'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