

Cord Blood or Amniotic Fluid Banking: Would You Do It?

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Over the past few years, most expectant moms have heard about cord blood banking and its potential uses, but not many of us have even heard of [amniotic fluid](#) banking and its use in Europe and the U.S.

Amniotic fluid is the nourishing and protective liquid surrounding a baby during pregnancy. Because amniotic fluid is also one of the richest natural sources of stem cells (specifically mesenchymal cells), it may also benefit families well into the future. Mesenchymal stem cells are multifunctional and can develop into several different cell types, tissues and organs, including skin, cardiac tissue, kidney, liver, bone, and muscle. That means that banked stem cells could potentially be used to treat a wide variety of diseases and for tissue regeneration.

[Plus: Amniotic Fluid: What You Need to Know](#)

Amniotic fluid banking is a simple process: moms who already plan to undergo amniocentesis for [prenatal testing](#) could opt to have their amniotic fluid banked then (banking is *only* done during the course of prenatal testing). The collection does not change the testing procedures, nor the outcome of the testing, because more fluid is generally drawn than is necessary for testing. Banking basically amounts to storing already withdrawn leftover fluid, since only about one teaspoonful is needed for storage. The sample is then sent to a lab for processing and storage.



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Although current uses for mesenchymal stem cells are limited, a lot of research is currently focused on discovering their potential uses and applications. There is currently just a single amniotic fluid bank in the U.S., [Biocell Center](#) (meaning that there's no competition, nor are there any public amniotic fluid banks—so no donations). The company states that they offer a range of affordable payment plans and will work with expectant families to make amniotic fluid banking accessible, but the typical fees are: \$1,650 for the first year and then \$120 per year for storage beyond the first year.

[Plus: Questions to Ask Your Health Care Professional About Amniotic Fluid Banking](#)

On a related note, cord blood banking stores umbilical cord blood for potential future use in a public or private cord blood bank (families who donate cord blood to public banks are unable to retrieve their donated blood, while families who store their donation in a private bank retain access to it until the donor baby becomes an adult). Cord blood contains hematopoietic stem cells, which can form red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Cord blood cells, which are cryogenically preserved in storage, are currently used to treat certain blood- and immune system-related genetic diseases, blood disorders, and cancers. In years to come, research could lead to other uses.

[Plus: Parents Discuss Their Choices About Cord Blood Banking](#)