

Create one life and save another. Find out how new mums are helping to save lives by donating their cord blood



## Do something amazing

**M**OST of us will have heard of the National Blood Service and, hopefully, will have made a donation or two along the way, but you might not be so familiar with the vital work it carries out with the Cord Blood Bank.

Cord blood is the blood found in the placenta and umbilical cord following the birth of a baby. It is usually thrown away, but can be used to make a lifesaving difference to another person's life. This is because cord blood contains stem cells which are like building blocks that the body can develop into any of the normal blood cells it needs.

Stem cells can be used to help patients whose bone marrow is not working properly, which can happen due to disease or damage through medical treatments like chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Sometimes the only way to help a patient is to replace their damaged bone marrow. Usually, this is done by a bone marrow transplant, but for some patients, no match can be found and receiving a stem cell transplant from a cord blood donation is their only option. The stem cells replace the patient's bone marrow, making the new blood cells they need, and this vital cord blood has helped many patients, including those suffering from leukaemia, genetic and metabolic disorders.

Mum of three, Leanne Starrs (pictured below), made the lifesaving decision to donate the cord blood from each of her



children and is appealing for other pregnant women to do the same.

"I just think it is a really amazing thing to do and to think one of my babies may save another's life is a great feeling," says Leanne.

"I have been lucky enough to have three beautiful children and have been able to donate their cord blood each time."

Rebecca Khan, 27 from Borehamwood, is also

planning to donate cord blood from the birth of her baby.


"I always intended to donate the cord blood if I had a child and now I am expecting my first baby I am delighted to be able to do so. I think it's great to be able to potentially save another person's life using something that would usually be thrown away.

"Choosing to donate was really easy. I sent in the enquiry form and the Cord Blood Bank then called to explain the procedure and ask me a few questions. I have been told it won't affect my care in hospital and the collection process sounds simple enough. I am really looking forward to the arrival of my baby and am pleased to have the opportunity to donate the cord blood as well."

The NHS Cord Blood Bank was set up in Edgware in 1996, with the aim of collecting and storing voluntary cord blood donations from mothers for use by anyone, anywhere in the world. Cord blood is only collected in hospitals where trained and dedicated staff from the NHS Cord Blood Bank are located, which currently include Northwick Park, Barnet General, Luton and Dunstable Hospitals and, more recently, Watford General Hospital. At present, more than 200,000 cord blood donations are stored worldwide and the NHS Cord Blood Bank has in excess of 8,500 donations.

Ruth and Steve Cooper have great praise for cord blood donors as their son Jack (pictured above) was given a lifesaving cord blood transplant in 2003 after he was diagnosed with Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID), a disorder which leaves the body unable to fight infection.

"When Jack was six months old, he was admitted to hospital for tests to investigate a persistent night-time cough," explains Ruth.

"When blood tests revealed he was suffering from SCID, a stem cell transplant was Jack's only chance of survival and a perfect match to Jack's tissue type was available through a cord blood bank. Looking at Jack now, you'd never know he'd once been so ill. He's now a normal little boy who goes to playgroup and plays with his toys. The cord blood donor gave us the chance of life for Jack and we're forever grateful." 

**For further information on donating cord blood, call the NHS Cord Blood Bank on 020 8437 1740, email [cordblood.donation@nbs.nhs.uk](mailto:cordblood.donation@nbs.nhs.uk) or visit [www.blood.co.uk/pages/cord\\_blood.html](http://www.blood.co.uk/pages/cord_blood.html). [www.nhscordblood.co.uk](http://www.nhscordblood.co.uk)**