

Fit for life



Ali and Casey Williams have chosen to bank their baby's cord blood to give it the best chance of a healthy, active life.

Ali and Casey Williams have both made a career from being fit – so it's little wonder they want their baby to be fit for life. That's why they've decided cord blood banking is the logical thing to do...

Winning All Black lock Ali Williams and his fitness entrepreneur wife, Casey, are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their first baby. Due early this month, Casey is naturally very excited about the big day. Not only is she thrilled about welcoming the little one, but she's also doing something very special for her baby.

"We've decided to bank our baby's cord blood," explains Casey. "We know a couple of families that have done it, and it just makes perfect sense to us. It's something that every parent should consider."

So what is cord blood banking?

A baby's umbilical cord contains stem cells. A stem cell is a special kind of cell that self-renews. What's special about stem cells is that they re-build the immune system. This allows the immune system to fight aggressive diseases, such as Leukaemia.

The science behind stem cells is very exciting and clinical trials are happening to see if they can also treat Cerebral Palsy, brain injury, Autism and Diabetes.

It's now possible for Kiwi parents to bank their child's cord blood – and a child can have access to their own cord blood their whole life.

So when Casey gives birth to little Williams Junior, her obstetrician will collect the cord blood, and it'll be sent to a secure processing and storage laboratory.

"There's only one chance to do this, but it's amazing to think that you really can give your child a gift that'll last for his or her lifetime," says Casey.

Health matters

It's little wonder that the Williams family are keen to do this for their child. Ali was always an active boy, representing Auckland at a junior level in soccer, tennis and cricket before taking up rugby.

Casey is an active lady too: she runs a pole fitness studio, and teaches the Body Beautiful fitness technique, which combines yoga, pilates and ballet.

"Everyone wants their child to be happy and healthy, but you never know what the future holds. Saving the cord blood for our baby is our way of ensuring that we're giving them the best start in life."

Good health is on Casey's mind for other reasons too: she had a very difficult first trimester in her pregnancy. "I was pretty much bedridden for the first trimester. It gave Ali and I a real reminder of how much we rely on our bodies and our good health."

There's only one chance

In New Zealand, cord blood collection and storage is provided by CordBank (which is licensed by the NZ Ministry of Health).

Cord blood stem cells can only be collected at your baby's birth, so parents need to register with CordBank in advance so that the Collection Kit is ready. Alternatively, family and friends can contribute towards the cost via gift vouchers. It's one of the few gifts that'll not only last a lifetime – but it could help save a child's life.

You can find out more about cord blood banking at: www.cordbank.co.nz

Cord blood banking quick facts:

- Cord blood helps the immune system to fight aggressive diseases, such as Leukaemia, Lymphomas, Anaemia and bone marrow cancers.
- In the USA, FDA-approved clinical trials using umbilical cord blood are underway for the treatment of Autism, Parkinson's Disease, MS, Alzheimer's and strokes.
- Cord blood banking is a rapidly evolving area of medicine, but you can only take advantage of it if you have access to your stem cells.
- The stem cells in cord blood are an exact DNA match for your child, which means that there is no chance of rejection.
- The only other way to obtain stem cells is via bone marrow transplants, which are painful and have a high risk of complications. Happily, cord blood banking is easy, safe and pain-free for both mother and baby.
- Three New Zealand children have already been successfully treated with cord blood banked with CordBank. You can see their stories at www.cordbank.co.nz.
- CordBank is New Zealand's longest established and most experienced cord blood collection, processing and storage facility. It is the only private cord blood bank in the country.
- Stored cord blood is immediately available for use and has no expiry date.

To find out more:

Call 0800 267 322 or email info@cordbank.co.nz for a FREE information kit and DVD.

To register: See the costs and interest-free payment options at www.cordbank.co.nz