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## Health: Potential Benefits Of Umbilical Cords

by *Stephanie Stahl*

PHILADELPHIA (CBS 3) — In health, a growing number of families are investing in a potential lifeline that comes with a new born baby and **Medical Reporter Stephanie Stahl** has the details.

When a baby is born, families can save blood from the umbilical cord that can be a treatment for a variety of diseases and it's been a life saver for some.

Twelve-year-old Brandyn Orr is healthy today, but as a toddler he had leukemia.

"He fought tooth and nail in the beginning," said Brandyn's mother, Susan Jarvis-Orr.

Years of chemotherapy led to remission but, "Brandyn relapsed," said Susan.

He needed a stem cell transplant and didn't have to worry about waiting for a donor match.

When his two younger brothers were born, Brandyn's mother saved blood from their umbilical cords; cord blood is rich with stem cells.

"It was enough to do the transplant, it was the most wonderful news I've ever heard," said Susan.

The Orr's stored their stem cells at a private blood bank, one of a growing number in a 12-million dollar a year industry.

"Some people look at it as biological insurance," said Stephen Grant of Family Cord.

Stem cells from cord blood can treat diseases like leukemia and sickle cell anemia.

Research is underway for diabetes, heart failure, spinal cord injuries, and stroke.

Pediatric hematologist Bertram Lubin sees the benefits, but says the chances of using a child's own cord blood are slim and if a child does have a genetic disease.

"There's a chance that the genetics are in that cord blood, so, under those circumstances that cord blood wouldn't be used," explained Lubin.

Susan's convinced cord blood saved Brandyn's life.

"He's my right hand man; he's my heart, my life," said Susan.

Private banks charge up to 2-thousand dollars to process cord blood plus about 125-dollars a year for storage.

Some banks will wave that fee if a sick child needs a transplant and a sibling is about to be born.

Several hospitals in our area have cord blood bank programs.

### Family Cord Information

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