

Delayed cord blood clamping for baby health

Many moms are requesting delayed clamping of the cord in their birth plans not knowing that it is not applicable for all deliveries. It is not possible with cord blood storage however it can be done even during a caesarean delivery.

There are no formal guidelines for the staff working in labour room about when the cord should be clamped and this is because there is still no consensus on this issue. The World Health Organization dropped early clamping from its guidelines few years ago. Early clamping is defined as less than 10 sec, and delayed as more than 120 - 180 sec after delivery of the baby.

Blood boosting may not be the best practice and could be causing health problems such as neonatal jaundice to the new-borns. The latest scientific opinion paper from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology "Clamping of the umbilical cord and placental transfusion" says: "Arterial and venous cord blood gases are influenced by timing of cord clamping. These differences are small and unlikely to be of clinical importance". Iron deficiency anemia in preschool children affects globally almost a quarter of them and can harm the child's brain development. A Swedish study confirms that a delay of cord clamping of more than three minutes can reduce the incidence of iron deficiency anemia with 45% at 4 years of age without substantial side effects. At birth a new-born's blood volume can be boosted by a third with delayed cord clamping. We should not forget that we are discussing only babies that are born with low risk pregnancies and do not need immediate resuscitation at birth.