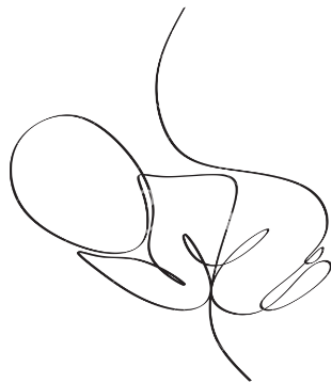


Optimal Cord Management



What is Optimal Cord Management?

Optimal cord management has also been described as deferred (or delayed) cord clamping.

The umbilical cord which allows blood to flow from the placenta to the baby is routinely cut after every birth.

Optimal cord management involves waiting to clamp the cord until the most suitable time for your baby. This could be after one minute, or longer depending on the situation. By deferring cord clamping for at least one minute, it allows extra blood to flow to the baby after birth which has significant short- and long-term benefits to both preterm and term infants.

Deferred cord clamping is currently recommended practice by The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) among others.

What will happen at the birth?

After birth (either vaginal or caesarean birth) your baby will be checked by the midwife or doctor (obstetrician or neonatologist) present.

If your baby does not need immediate resuscitation, then we will offer to delay cord clamping for one minute or longer, depending on the situation.

Due to gravity, your baby will be kept at the level of the placenta to ensure they continue to get blood flow. Therefore, if you give birth in theatre, skin to skin will be possible after the cord has been clamped.

What are the benefits?

All babies can benefit from deferred cord clamping.

In babies born after 37 weeks, it has been shown to improve the levels of red blood cells, iron and ferritin that the baby has up to 6 months of age. This is important, as adequate iron levels are associated with better neurodevelopmental outcomes.

In babies born early (before 37 weeks gestation) the benefits are even more significant. The benefits are:

- Reduced need for red blood cell transfusions by 10%
- Reduced risk of bleeding in the brain that can affect preterm infants
- Reduced risk of late onset infections
- A more stable blood pressure after birth
- Reduced risk of gut infections that affect preterm infants
- Reduced risk of death in hospital

Are there any side effects?

Jaundice is a very common condition affecting new-born babies. In some cases, it requires treatment with blue light known as phototherapy (which is a commonly used, safe and effective treatment). There is a slightly increased risk (of around 2%) that your baby may develop jaundice that requires treatment with phototherapy following deferred cord clamping.

Are there situations in which deferred cord clamping will not be performed?

Although deferred cord clamping is recommended practice for most births, there are certain situations in which it is not appropriate:

- If your baby is unwell at birth and needs immediate medical attention
- If you develop complications following birth that require urgent treatment
- If there is concern about the integrity of the cord or the placenta
- If there is a prior antenatal plan made jointly between the neonatal and obstetric team due to case complexity
- If you are having a multiple birth in which the babies share the same placenta
- If you choose to bank or donate the cord blood (in this case, we will need to clamp the cord immediately)
- If you, as the parents, decide not to have deferred cord clamping

References

BAPM. Optimal Cord Management in Preterm Babies – A quality improvement toolkit. 2020. NICE

WHO. Guideline: Delayed umbilical cord clamping for improved maternal and infant health and nutrition outcomes. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Intrapartum care. Quality statement 6: Delayed cord clamping. 2015:25.

Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Clamping of the Umbilical Cord and Placental Transfusion. Scientific Impact Paper No14. 2015.

Questions you might like to ask the people caring for you:

Why am I being offered deferred cord clamping?

Will it be beneficial for my baby?

Will there be any side effects for me or my baby?

When might I not be able to have deferred cord clamping?

You may like to write other questions you have below:

This information leaflet is designed to give you information about Optimal Cord Management, when and how it is offered. This has been written by a collection of midwives, doctors, and our Maternity Voices Partners so the information is accurate and useful.

If you have any further **questions or concerns**, please contact our team:

- **Community Midwives Base - 020 7288 3482**
- **Neonatal Unit - 0207 288 5530**

[Patient advice and liaison service \(PALS\)](#)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Date published: 23/03/2023
Review date: 23/03/2025
Ref: ACW/WH/OCM/01

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