

UMBILICAL CORD

The umbilical cord is a soft tube-like organ that connects you and your baby through your placenta from the early stages of pregnancy. This vital organ can be 19 to 23 inches in length.

The umbilical cord is responsible for transferring **oxygen** and **nutrient-rich blood** from you to your baby. The umbilical cord also removes waste from your baby. When your baby is born, your provider or your support person will cut the umbilical cord, **leaving a small piece**, called a **stump** behind. The stump will fall off within your baby's first 1-3 weeks of life.

DEVELOPING BABY

The baby receives everything they need through the placenta and umbilical cord.



UMBILICAL CORD CARE

If your support person clamps the umbilical cord at birth, your provider will guide them. There are no nerves in the umbilical cord and cutting the cord does not hurt your baby. However, the stump can easily get injured or become infected and needs to be kept clean and dry so it can fall off naturally.

Steps to keep your baby's umbilical cord clean and dry:

1. **Always allow your baby's stump to air dry.** Do not apply anything on the umbilical cord.
2. **When changing your baby's diaper, fold the front of the diaper down below the stump.** This way the diaper will not tug on it.
3. **Do not submerge your baby into a bathtub until the stump falls off.** Sponge-bathe your baby by washing each body part with lukewarm water and a washcloth. Wipe the stump with a warm washcloth and allow it to air dry.
4. **Do not try to pull your baby's stump off.** Pulling can cause unnecessary bleeding and injury to your baby. It will fall off naturally.
5. **When your baby's stump falls off, there may be light bleeding.** If the bleeding is continuous, take your baby to the emergency room immediately.

DELAYED UMBILICAL CORD CLAMPING

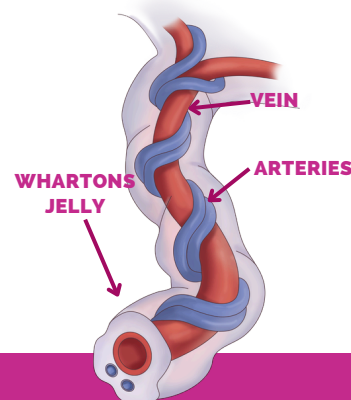
Delayed umbilical cord clamping means that the cord cutting is delayed for **at least 30–60 seconds and up to 5 minutes long**.

Both full-term and preterm babies can benefit from delayed cord clamping, even if your baby was born through Caesarian (C-section) delivery. Delayed cord clamping increases hemoglobin levels and improves iron stores during the first months of life.

Talk to your provider about the benefits of delayed cord clamping based on you and your baby's health condition at birth.

NORMAL UMBILICAL CORD

A normal umbilical cord has one vein, two arteries and gelatinous substance called Wharton's Jelly



COMPLICATIONS DURING PREGNANCY OR LABOR

Umbilical cord prolapse:

A serious complication where the umbilical cord drops into the vagina in front of the baby's head. The baby's body puts pressure on the cord and cuts off its own oxygen supply. If prolapse happens, the baby will need to be delivered immediately via C-section.

Main warning sign: baby has a low heart rate

SIGNS/RISKS OF UMBILICAL CORD INFECTION AFTER DELIVERY

Call your provider immediately if you experience:

- Swelling or bleeding in the area of the stump
- Leaking clear or yellow discharge with a foul smell
- Changes in color
- The baby has fever of 100.4 or higher
- The baby is not feeding well
- The baby is overly tired
- The stump has not fallen off 3 weeks after birth

SOURCES

- ACOG: bit.ly/3VaOul6
- Basta M, Lipsett BJ. Anatomy, Abdomen and Pelvis, Umbilical Cord: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557389/
- Stanford Medicine: bit.ly/3WBm2dj
- Cleveland Clinic: bit.ly/3W4Vlbv
- Global Health Media: bit.ly/3hzhOEd
- The Gale Encyclopedia of Pregnancy and Childbirth - Umbilical Cord - 682-685. Vol. 2. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2017. (Gale eBooks)

BLACK
BELONGING. LOVE. AFFINITY. COMMUNITY. KINSHIP.
WELLNESS & PROSPERITY CENTER

Designed exclusively by Madelyn Neufield for
BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center.
All rights reserved. ©