

# Later Clamping of Umbilical Cord Benefits Newborns: Study

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A new study adds to growing evidence suggesting that doctors clamp umbilical cords too soon after a baby's birth.

Doctors routinely clamp and sever the umbilical cord less than a minute after birth, a practice believed to lower the risk of severe bleeding in the mother.

But this new study found that delaying clamping for at least a minute after birth allows more time for blood to move from the placenta and helps boost iron stores and hemoglobin levels in newborns, without increasing the risks to mothers, *The New York Times* reported.

Compared with babies who had early clamping, those who had delayed clamping had higher hemoglobin levels 24 to 48 hours after birth and were less likely to be iron deficient three to six months after birth, the *Times* reported.

Later clamping did not increase the mothers' risk of severe bleeding after birth, blood loss or reduced hemoglobin levels, according to the study published Wednesday in *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*.

The findings are based on an analysis of data from 15 studies involving nearly 4,000 women and infant pairs.

"In terms of a healthy start for a baby, one thing we can do by delaying cord clamping is boost their iron stores for a little bit longer," said review lead author Susan McDonald, a professor of midwifery at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, the *Times* reported.

The timing of cord clamping has been controversial for years. The review findings appear to bolster the case for later clamping.

"It's a persuasive finding," Dr. Jeffrey Ecker, the chair of the committee on obstetrics practice for the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, told the *Times*. "It's tough not to think that delayed cord clamping, including better iron stores and more hemoglobin, is a good thing."

"I suspect we'll have more and more delayed cord clamping," Ecker added.

Added Dr. Eileen Hutton, a midwife who teaches obstetrics at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, and published a review on cord clamping: "The implications (of early clamping) are huge. We are talking about depriving babies of 30 to 40 percent of their blood at birth -- and just because we've learned a practice that's bad."

The World Health Organization recommends clamping of the cord after one to three minutes because it "improves the iron status of the infant," the *Times* reported. In some cases, delayed clamping can lead to [jaundice](#) in infants due to [liver](#) trouble or an excessive loss of red blood cells. Because of this, the WHO recommends that access to therapy for jaundice be taken into consideration.

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