



Rh incompatibility information sheet

This sheet is to provide you information about Rh negative blood type, ie A-. If you have a blood type that is negative please read the information below and let us know if you have any questions.

What is it?

Rh or Rhesus factor is a type of protein on the surface of red blood cells and is the most common of the minor blood types. People who have this protein are considered Rh-positive and those who do not are considered Rh-negative. Although being positive or negative has no effect on your health it can become problematic during pregnancy.

If you are Rh-negative and Rh-positive blood enters into your bloodstream, your body will produce antibodies to attack the foreign blood. This can happen when you are carrying a Rh-positive baby and any trauma occurs that causes your baby's blood to mix with yours. This can be due to any trauma like a car accident, or any placental problems that can happen, including when the placenta detaches from the uterus after birth. On the contrary, if you are Rh-positive you are not at risk if you are exposed to Rh-negative blood. Once you have become sensitized to Rh-positive blood you will always be sensitized, **it is not reversible**.

What this means?

If your blood becomes exposed to Rh-positive blood and is not treated it will become sensitized (meaning your body will produce antibodies to attack all Rh-positive blood it finds). The antibodies can then cross the placenta and start to attack your baby's blood. The risks include miscarriage, fetal anemia, serious illness, brain damage, severe jaundice or possibly fetal or neonatal death. In subsequent pregnancy you may have late 1st trimester and early 2nd trimester miscarriages if the baby has Rh-positive blood.

How to protect yourself and your baby.

If you do not know your blood type we will want to do a test to find out what your Rh factor is. If you are Rh-negative further test will be done to see if you have already been sensitized from a previous birth, abortion or miscarriage or any complications with previous pregnancies. In past generations Rh incompatibility was a very serious and dangerous thing. Medical advances have been made and women are now able to carry subsequent healthy babies to full term, even if there is an incompatibility between mother and child. A blood product called Rh immunoglobulin (the most common being RhoGAM) is given to you by an injected at 28 weeks of pregnancy, and then again within 72 hours after your birth. There is also a new test to find out what your baby's blood type is while you are still pregnant. It is called Fetal RHD genotype testing. There is more info at the end of this hand out about this test.



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More on immunoglobulin.

Rh(G) immunoglobulin is not a vaccine, but it does stop your blood from producing any potentially dangerous Rh antibodies that would otherwise cause damage to your growing baby. Rh(G) immunoglobulin is a blood product that comes from donors who have been sensitized to the Rh factor. Receiving this shot prevents your body from producing its own antibodies that would attack an Rh-positive baby. The shot costs around \$120-\$180 per injection, but is usually covered by insurance.

Other important things to know:

RhoGAM is only good for the pregnancy you received the injection. You will need to be treated for each subsequent pregnancies. It is also important to receive treatment after any miscarriage, abortion or ectopic pregnancy. If you are already sensitized RhoGAM does not help. You will need to see a physician and your pregnancy will be closely monitored to see if any problems arise.

Reasons why you might decline Rh(G) immunoglobulin.

It is a blood product and this might coincide with your religious or cultural views. Although donors are thoroughly screened, all blood products carry a small chance of passing on infections. Some rare side effects could occur, like fever, chills, vomiting, rash, inflammation of the heart, or allergic reaction.

If you choose not to receive Rh(G) it is important to know that the risks are fairly severe and irreversible. If no trauma occurs during your pregnancy you may choose to wait until your baby is born to perform a blood typing to see if you need to receive the injection.

What are my choices?

- Current recommendation is that every woman who is Rh negative receive an injection of RhoGAM at 28 weeks of pregnancy, then again within 72 hours after the birth.
- If you have a trauma or accident at any point during your pregnancy, it is recommended that you receive an injection of RhoGAM within 72 hours of the incident and then every 12 weeks until the birth, as well as another injection 72 hours after the birth.
- Another option is to forgo an injection at 28 weeks and at birth we will blood type the baby. If the baby is also negative then you can refuse the injection. If the baby is positive then you can receive the injection. **If you choose to opt out of RhoGAM after birth and your baby is positive we will require you to write out in your own words that you understand the risk of not receiving RhoGAM.**



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Please sign the next page and return to Birth, Babies and Beyond.

Signature Page:

I have been given information regarding RH negative blood type and RH sensitization. I understand that if I don't receive Rh(G) that the risks are fairly severe and irreversible.

I have chosen the following option: (please initial next to choice)

_____ The current recommendation which is to receive an injection of RhoGAM at 28 weeks of pregnancy. We will check the baby's blood type at birth and if the baby is RH positive then I will receive another injection within 72 hours after the birth.

_____ If I have a trauma or accident at any point during your pregnancy, I will receive an injection of RhoGAM within 72 hours of the incident and then every 12 weeks until the birth. We will check the baby's blood type at birth and if the baby is RH positive then I will receive another injection within 72 hours after the birth.

_____ I will forgo an injection at 28 weeks and at birth we will blood type the baby. If the baby is also negative then you can refuse the injection. If the baby is positive then you can receive the injection.

If you choose to opt out of RhoGAM after birth and your baby is positive we will require you to write out in your own words that you understand the risk of not receiving RhoGAM.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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