

If You Are Blood Type Rh Negative

Blood type is divided into blood groups (A, B, AB or O) and Rh factor (positive or negative). This pamphlet is meant to help you understand what steps are needed if you are Rh negative and what can be done to help protect you and your baby.

What is Rh Negative?

- As part of your prenatal blood tests, your blood type was tested and you are Rh factor negative.
- This means your red blood cells do not have the Rh factor on the outer surface of the cell. 15/100 people are Rh negative.
- Your baby's blood type is determined by your blood type and the father of the baby's blood type

How does this affect my baby?

- If you are Rh negative and your baby is Rh positive, your immune system may react to red blood cells from the baby and form antibodies against the baby's Rh-positive blood cells.
- Usually, antibodies or blood proteins are made and used to fight infections.

- Your antibodies pass across the placenta to the baby, especially in the last part of your pregnancy, to protect your baby from infections during his or her first few months of life.
- If your body learns to make antibodies to blood cells that are Rh positive, these antibodies can pass across the placenta and attack the baby's blood cells causing them to burst.
- This can be very serious for the baby.
- If your body has antibodies to blood cells, your body's reaction can get stronger and stronger with each pregnancy.
- This is the reason your blood is tested for blood antibodies in each pregnancy and after each birth.

Will I need to be tested again?

- Your blood will be retested for antibodies around 24 to 26 weeks (often at the same time as the gestational diabetes screening test) and again after the birth of your baby.
- You will need to be tested in every pregnancy.

Is there anything I can do to stop my body from making these antibodies?

- We can give you an injection (shot) to block your body from reacting to blood cells from the baby.
- This shot is a carefully prepared blood product, Rh Immune Globulin (RhIg), often called Rhogam.

What is Rh Immune Globulin?

- Rh Immune Globulin is collected from the blood of people who make antibodies to the Rh factor.
- It is given by a shot into a muscle, usually the upper arm or buttock.
- These antibodies will "mop" up any baby blood cells that crossed into your body so that your body will not have time to react and make antibodies.

Are there any side effects of RhIg?

- The blood product, Rh Immune Globulin is carefully tested and treated to make it safe from injection.
- With the current testing system, there have been no infections related to Rh Immune Globulin in North America.
- Some people may feel sore in the muscle where the shot is given or may get a headache.
- It is extremely rare for a person to have an allergic reaction to the shot. This may show up as chills, headache, dizziness, fever or rash soon after getting the shot.
- You should plan to stay for 20 minutes after you receive the shot.

When should I get the shot?

If there is possibility that some of baby's red blood cells could have crossed into your blood, you will be given the shot as soon as we can.

- One of the times baby's red blood cells may cross into your circulation is if there is any pregnancy bleeding.
- Other times might be if there is an invasive test such as amniocentesis, or significant injury to your abdomen.
- **You should get the shot around 26 to 28 weeks of your pregnancy.** The shot may be given during your regular prenatal visit. Sometimes the timing of your regular appointment does not fit with the timing of the shot. Then an extra appointment at the clinic is needed.

When it is time for you to get the Rh Immune Globulin, **please go to the Outpatient Laboratory on the second floor of the Richmond Hospital (just down the central hallway near the cafeteria) at least 30 minutes before your doctor visit for the shot. Give the laboratory staff the special order sheet and the copy of your blood type test report so they can register and prepare the medication for you. Please bring the medicine directly to your doctor visit.**

Why do I need to sign the "consent" form?

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- All hospitals require written permission for the medical team to give you things like blood products.
- We will ask you to sign a consent form during one of your prenatal visits to show that we have explained the reason for the shot of Rh Immune Globulin, the possible problems of getting the shot as well as the possible problems if you do not get the shot.
- A copy of this consent will become part of your medical record in your doctor's office and at the hospital.

What happens after the birth of my baby?

- Right after the birth of your baby, a sample will be collected from the umbilical cord.
- The blood sample will be tested during daytime lab hours and if the baby is Rh positive you will get another shot.
- No Rh Immune Globulin is needed after this pregnancy if your baby is Rh negative.
- You will need to be tested every pregnancy.

What if I am ready to go home before test results are done?

- When possible, we prefer you to wait until the tests are finished.
- If you go home before the tests are finished and you need the RhIg shot, it can be given the next day, but not later than 72 hours. Special arrangements will have to be made, just like the arrangements made when you were given the shot in your pregnancy (see the instructions in the box on the previous page).

If you have other questions, please talk to your doctor, your hospital or community nurse.