

RH NEGATIVE BLOOD TYPES

WHY IS MY BLOOD TYPE IMPORTANT?

Blood type refers to different types of proteins we have in our blood. Rh (Rhesus) factor is a protein most people have in their blood. If you do not have this protein, you are Rh-negative. During pregnancy, blood cells from the fetus can mix with your blood. This can happen during miscarriage, abortion, delivery, or procedures in pregnancy. If you are Rh-negative, and the fetus is Rh-positive, then your body may recognize the fetal blood type as foreign and create antibodies against it. In a future pregnancy, those antibodies can attack the blood of a Rh-positive fetus, causing severe anemia and health problems to the fetus.

CAN RH ANTIBODIES BE PREVENTED?

Bleeding at less than 8 weeks in pregnancy is very unlikely to cause these antibodies to develop. Many experts agree that you are very unlikely to develop the antibodies at less than 10 weeks in pregnancy. If you are at risk of developing these antibodies, you can receive an injection of Rho(D) immune globulin (RhIG), called "RhoGAM", to prevent it. This injection should be given within 72 hours of bleeding onset.

I DON'T KNOW MY BLOOD TYPE. DO I NEED TESTING?

Your clinician will discuss testing with you if you are more than 8 weeks pregnant at time of your abortion. Rh factor testing is done with a blood test at the lab. If you will be less than 8 weeks pregnant at time of your abortion, then RhoGAM is not recommended, so you will also not need testing.

I AM RH-NEGATIVE. DO I NEED RHOGAM?

- **Less than 8 weeks pregnant:** RhoGAM is NOT recommended
- **8-10 weeks pregnant:** RhoGAM may be recommended. Discuss with your clinician.
- **More than 10 weeks pregnant:** RhoGAM is recommended

RH IMMUNE GLOBULIN (RHOGAM)

HOW SAFE IS RHOGAM?

The injection is very safe. Side effects are usually mild and include local swelling at the injection site, chills and headaches. Allergic reactions are very rare and would require treatment in the Emergency Department. Since RhoGAM is made using components of human blood, you will need to provide consent to receive the injection. While there is a very rare risk of blood-borne infections such as HIV or Hepatitis whenever receiving a blood-product, these infections have NEVER been associated with RhoGAM.

DO I NEED TO TAKE ANY PRECAUTIONS AFTER RHOGAM?

RhoGAM can temporarily interfere with your immune response to live-virus vaccines, such as MMR and Varicella. This effect can last for 3 months after receiving RhoGAM. If you require any live-virus vaccines during that time, talk with your care provider.

WHAT IF I CHOOSE NOT TO GET RHOGAM?

After reviewing the risks and benefits of RhoGAM with your clinician, you may choose not to get RhoGAM. If you do form these antibodies, there is no medical treatment to reverse it. This can cause severe anemia and health problems in future pregnancies.

WHEN SHOULD I GET RHOGAM?

Your clinician will discuss with you when you should receive your RhoGAM injection. This can be done before taking the abortion pill, or **within 72 hours of bleeding onset**.

HOW TO RECEIVE RHOGAM

The process for receiving RhoGAM injection varies by region and by hospital. If you are outside of these regions, your care team will help coordinate a plan for you to receive treatment locally.

Things to bring to your RhoGAM treatment centre:

- Rh Immune Globulin referral letter from SHORE. *You will receive this at your appointment.*
- Your blood type results. *You will receive this at your appointment.*
- Your health card or proof of insurance

GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL (KITCHENER-WATERLOO)

Please go to the Emergency Room and present your referral letter and blood type results. Please be prepared to be at the hospital for several hours.

CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (CAMBRIDGE)

Please go to the Emergency Room and present your referral letter and blood type results. Please be prepared to be at the hospital for several hours.

RHO GAM PLAN

Date:

Location:

GUELPH GENERAL HOSPITAL (GUELPH)

An appointment will be arranged for you at the Ambulatory Care Centre on Level 1 of the hospital. Proceed to the Registration Desk at your scheduled time. SHORE Centre will provide you with appointment details. These appointments are only available Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, 1:00–2:30 PM.

Sources:

[SOGC Guidelines: Prevention of Rh Alloimmunization. J Obstet Gynaecol Can. Jan 2018. SOGC Online Medical Abortion Training Program \(2016\)](#)

