

What can happen to my baby if I have Rh antibodies?

If you are pregnant and Rh negative and your baby is Rh positive, antibodies can form. Antibodies can cross the placenta and cause a serious life-threatening problem for your baby, called Hemolytic Disease of the Newborn (HDN).

HDN can cause:

- low hemoglobin (anemia)
- toxins in the blood (jaundice)
- brain damage
- death

What can I do to lower the risk of HDN?

HDN can be prevented in 99.9 per cent of Rh negative women with injections of RhoGam during pregnancy and following the birth.

What is RhoGam and how does it work?

RhoGam is a specially prepared substance made from human blood that will destroy Rh positive blood cells and prevent antibodies from forming in the blood stream.

When is RhoGam given?

RhoGam is given once at 28 weeks and again within 72 hours after you deliver (if your baby is confirmed to be Rh positive).

How do I book my bloodwork and Rh Immune Globulin (RhoGam) injection?

You have two options to choose from:

1

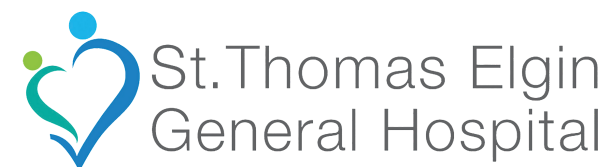
- Have your blood drawn at an outpatient lab (i.e. LifeLabs).
- Book your RhoGam injection at the hospital. You must have your RhoGam injection within 14 days of your blood draw.
- Your RhoGam injection will take place in the Women and Children's Unit and will take approximately 45 minutes.

2

- Book an appointment to have your blood drawn and RhoGam injection at the same time in the Women and Children's Unit. This appointment will take approximately 1-2 hours.

Book your appointment(s):

Contact the Women and Children's Unit (Monday - Friday; 8AM to 4PM)
Phone: (519) 631-2030, Ext. 2196



Rh Factor & Immune Globulin Patient Information Handout



What does it mean to be Rh negative?

There are four different blood types (A, B, AB, and O). There is also an antigen on some blood cells called the Rh factor. If you have the Rh factor on your blood cells, you are Rh positive (Rh+). If you don't have the Rh factor on your blood cells, you are Rh negative (Rh-).

There is a 15 per cent chance that you are Rh negative. Being Rh negative has no effect on general health, but can cause serious problems during pregnancy.

How does being Rh negative affect pregnancy?

People who are Rh negative can make antibodies if exposed to Rh positive blood. This can happen during pregnancy or with a blood transfusion.

If a woman is pregnant, some of the baby's blood can come in contact with her blood (this is normal). If this happens, antibodies can form. Antibodies are proteins the body makes to protect itself when it reacts with something that is foreign (i.e. Rh+ blood is recognized as foreign to an Rh- woman).

If a woman is pregnant and Rh-, and the baby's father is Rh+, she could be carrying an Rh+ baby, and is therefore at risk for making Rh antibodies.

What are the side effects of RhoGam?

Most people who get RhoGam have no side effects. Rarely, RhoGam can cause:

- Pain at the injection site
- Fever (temp over 38.5 °C or 101.3 °F)
- Feeling weak and unwell (malaise)
- Headache
- Allergic reaction (i.e. hives - usually not bad and goes away quickly)

What if I choose not to get RhoGam?

Without RhoGam, there is a 12 per cent chance you will form Rh antibodies that can harm your baby. The risk increases with each pregnancy.



If you have questions or concerns, talk to your doctor or midwife.

NOTE: In some rare situations where there is a greater risk of your baby's blood mixing with your blood, you may be given RhoGam earlier in your pregnancy (i.e. If you have placenta previa, have had an amniocentesis, chorionic villa sampling, or have experienced a serious fall, car accident, or significant vaginal bleeding). In these circumstances, your physician or midwife may recommend that you receive RhoGam every 12 weeks until birth.

Do I need RhoGam every time I get pregnant?

RhoGam is recommended with every pregnancy. It will help protect your baby and any future pregnancies from HDN. Once your body makes antibodies, they do not go away. Every time you get pregnant, the risk to your baby is more serious.

What are the risks of RhoGam?

RhoGam is a blood product. The following steps are taken to ensure it is safe:

- All donors are tested for viruses (i.e. HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C)
- The product is filtered and treated to kill viruses

Each year over 100,000 injections of RhoGam are given in Canada. There have been NO reported cases of disease transmission in Canada caused by this blood product.