

RhD negative blood type in pregnancy

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about being RhD negative and having RhD immunoglobulin during and after pregnancy .

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you.

What is RhD negative blood type?

Two combined systems are used to classify blood type—the ABO system (blood types A, B, AB or O) and the Rh type (positive or negative). Your blood type is a combination of these two classification systems.

How can you tell what your baby's blood group is?

Your baby's blood type can be different to yours. It is not possible to know your baby's blood type until he or she is born. After birth, a small amount of your baby's blood is collected from the umbilical cord. This is sent to the laboratory to find out their blood type.

Why is RhD negative blood group important in pregnancy?

If you are RhD negative, and your baby is RhD positive, there can be problems if some of your baby's blood cells mix with your blood while you are pregnant. Your body may make antibodies against your baby's blood. These antibodies do not usually cause harm in your current pregnancy. However, if your next baby is also RhD positive, these antibodies may attack the blood cells of that baby. This can make your next baby very sick, cause brain damage, or even death. If your body makes antibodies, there is about a 70% chance that your next pregnancy will be affected.

When can baby's blood cells get into your blood?

Your baby's blood can get into your bloodstream:

- if you have invasive tests during pregnancy (e.g. chorionic villus sampling (CVS) or amniocentesis)
- if you experience vaginal bleeding a miscarriage or termination of pregnancy
- if you experience abdominal trauma (e.g. a blow to the abdomen)
- if a doctor tries to turn a baby around to be head first (external cephalic version)
- during labour or birth
- sometimes the cause is unknown

Can problems be prevented?

Having an injection of RhD immunoglobulin, often referred to as Anti-D, can prevent your body from developing antibodies.

When is RhD immunoglobulin recommended?

RhD immunoglobulin is recommended for all pregnant women in Australia who are RhD negative:

- in the 28th and 34th week of your pregnancy
- if there is concern that your baby's blood cells may have entered your bloodstream
- after birth if your baby is RhD positive

ABO	RhD	Blood type	RhD immunoglobulin in pregnancy?
A	Positive	A positive	✘
A	Negative	A negative	✓
B	Positive	B positive	✘
B	Negative	B negative	✓
O	Positive	O positive	✘
O	Negative	O negative	✓
AB	Positive	AB positive	✘
AB	Negative	AB negative	✓

Your blood type and RhD immunoglobulin in pregnancy

Is RhD immunoglobulin safe?

RhD immunoglobulin is made from the plasma (liquid part of blood) of Australian blood donors. The donors and donations are screened to reduce the risk of transmitting any diseases. There is no evidence to suggest that RhD immunoglobulin can harm your baby when given during pregnancy.

Very rarely a woman may be allergic to RhD immunoglobulin. Reactions that are more common are:

- injection site pain or irritation
- nausea
- dizziness
- headache

If you are concerned or have questions about having RhD immunoglobulin, talk to your care provider.

Support & Information

13HEALTH (13 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public.

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care

www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Queensland Clinical Guidelines: Access to the clinical guideline *Early pregnancy loss* aligned with this information and other information sheets www.health.qld.gov.au/qcg