

Rh Factor and RhoGAM[®]

Rh Factor

Just as there are different blood types (such as A and B), red blood cells contain a protein called Rh factor. Most people have this protein and are known as Rh positive. People who do not have Rh factor are known as Rh negative. A blood test can tell if you have Rh factor or not. Being Rh negative does not affect your health.

Rh Negative During Pregnancy and Birth

Problems can develop during pregnancy if you are Rh negative and your baby is Rh positive. During pregnancy you and your baby do not share blood but your baby's blood cells can cross the placenta into your blood.

Your Rh negative blood reacts to your baby's Rh positive blood by making antibodies against your baby's blood. These antibodies can affect your baby by causing:

- anemia
- jaundice
- illness
- brain damage
- death.

How to Prevent Problems During Pregnancy

A blood test can tell if your body has made these antibodies against your baby's blood.

If there are no antibodies, you can take a medicine (RhoGAM[®]) to prevent your blood from reacting against your baby's blood. RhoGAM is given by injection (shot).

RhoGAM is given at the following times:

- at 28 to 32 weeks of pregnancy
- within 72 hours of delivering an Rh positive baby
- after a miscarriage
- after an abortion
- for an ectopic pregnancy
- after receiving blood that is not Rh compatible.

RhoGAM may also be given at the following times:

- after an amniocentesis
- when the baby needs to be turned in the uterus before birth
- after an injury to the abdomen.

Possible Side Effects

The possible side effects of RhoGAM are:

- headache
- nausea (upset stomach)
- malaise
- dizziness
- soreness, bruising or both at the injection site.