

## Basic Information about RH Compatibility

In cases of Rh incompatibility, a baby's red blood cells have a substance called the Rh D factor, and the mother's blood cells do not. In medical terms, the baby is Rh positive and you are Rh negative.

If some of the baby's red blood cells leak into your system, your body may produce antibodies to the Rh D factor. This is a condition called sensitization.

These antibodies can cross the placenta and destroy the red blood cells in your unborn baby or in the next Rh-positive baby you have. This only occurs if you are Rh negative and your baby is Rh positive. It does not occur if you are Rh positive and your baby is Rh negative.

In most cases you will not be exposed to the baby's blood until you give birth. This usually means that your first baby is not affected. However, large amounts of the baby's blood often leak into the mother during delivery. Therefore the next Rh-positive baby you have could have problems if you have developed antibodies.

Occasionally, in the following situations, some of the baby's blood may leak into your system during pregnancy:

- After amniocentesis or other invasive procedure
- During a miscarriage or abortion
- During an ectopic pregnancy
- If you bleed heavily during pregnancy.

### **Treatment Options:**

You can choose to be given an injection of Rh-immune globulin at about 28 weeks of pregnancy, and within 72 hours after a birth, miscarriage, abortion, or amniocentesis. The Rh-immune globulin contains antibodies to the Rh D factor. These antibodies will destroy any red blood cells from the baby that have entered your blood. You will not have a chance to form your own antibodies to the Rh D factor. With this treatment incompatibility should not be a problem during your next pregnancy.

If you are an Rh-negative woman and you've conceived with an Rh-negative partner, you're not at risk of Rh sensitization during pregnancy.

### **Patient Statement:**

I have been given sufficient information concerning my condition and treatment options regarding blood typing and Rh incompatibility and acceptance of my decision is made clear by my signature in my chart on the topic. I take full responsibility for any and all risks and benefits of that decision.

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