

What is the Rh Factor?

The Rh factor is a red blood cell protein that is found in 83% of people. Those who have this protein are Rh positive, and those who do not have this protein are Rh negative.

I am Rh Negative. What does this mean for my pregnancy?

When an Rh negative woman is pregnant, it is possible for her baby to be Rh positive if the father has passed on the Rh positive factor to the baby.

Rh negative mothers may develop antibodies (a reaction) to the Rh positive blood type which is foreign to her. She may already have the antibodies at the start of the pregnancy or could first develop the antibodies during pregnancy if some of the baby's Rh positive blood gets into her circulation. These antibodies **will not** hurt the mother but can cross over to the baby and break down baby's Rh positive blood cells.

Future pregnancies with Rh positive babies will be at even higher risk because the mother's

body remembers how to make antibodies and will produce antibodies more quickly and at higher amounts.

In pregnancy, mothers find out what type of blood they have and whether they have any antibodies to other blood types. This antibody test is done in early pregnancy and again at 26 to 28 weeks.

How do Antibodies affect the Baby?

If the mother has antibodies that are against the baby's blood type, these antibodies can cross over, attach to the baby's blood cells and destroy them. This can cause anemia (low hemoglobin) before birth and even last for a while after birth.

When blood cells are broken down a product called bilirubin is made. Bilirubin is not a problem before the baby is born but can cause jaundice (yellow skin) in a newborn baby. Babies who are jaundiced can be treated in different ways but most often by putting them under special fluorescent lights.

This helps to break down and get rid of extra bilirubin. Having extra (high levels) of bilirubin can be harmful and it is important to keep the levels low for baby's health.

Blood tests and treatments are usually carried out in the hospital but may even continue after baby goes home.

Can this Problem be Prevented?

Yes. An injection of **Rh_o(D) Immune Globulin**, also called WinRho® SDF can lower the chance of making antibodies from 1 out of 10 women to 1 out of 1000.

What is Rh_o(D) Immune Globulin (WinRho® SDF)?

This product is made from the blood of people who have already made Rh antibodies. The blood from blood donors is tested for certain viruses (such as hepatitis B, C, and HIV/AIDS). Steps are also done to destroy and remove any viruses from the blood. There are no reports of infections caused by WinRho®SDF. For more product information see www.winrho.com.

When should I receive WinRho® SDF?

It is given to Rh negative women at the 28th week of pregnancy, and again after an Rh positive baby is born. Your health care provider may also talk to you about having it for other reasons, for example vaginal bleeding, miscarriage, abortion, tubal pregnancy, and injuries.

Are there Side Effects?

Soreness and some swelling from the needle site may happen in a small number of cases. Since there is a rare chance of a reaction to WinRho® SDF you will be asked to stay for 15 to 30 minutes after getting your injection. A reaction could be fever, chills, shaking, headache, or any feelings that are different from usual.

Please tell your doctor or health care provider if you have ever had a reaction to blood products or WinRho® SDF.

Will I need Injections with Future Pregnancies?

Yes. The WinRho® SDF is usually gone from the blood-stream after a few months. That is why extra doses are needed for each new pregnancy.

What if the Father of my Baby is also Rh Negative?

WinRho® SDF is not needed if the father of the baby is known for certain to be Rh negative. You can discuss this with your health care provider.

Will it Harm my Baby?

No. WinRho® SDF is given in such low doses that even if it gets into the baby's blood it is not harmful.

What is the Role of the Rh Program?

The **Rh Program of Nova Scotia** is a provincial program of IWK Health. We focus on the prevention and management of problems caused by Rh and other blood group antibodies. The Rh Program also provides an education and consultation service for health care providers.



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The Rh factor and Pregnancy

Rh Program of Nova Scotia



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