



# RH-NEGATIVE BLOOD TYPE IN PREGNANCY

A blood test at your first appointment will tell you if you have a Rh-negative or Rh-positive blood type. (For example, A- or A+.)

## WHAT DOES HAVING A RH-NEGATIVE BLOOD TYPE MEAN FOR MY PREGNANCY?

- During pregnancy and birth, a very small amount of the baby's blood can mix with your blood.
- If the baby's blood type is Rh-positive and you are Rh-negative, your body views the Rh-positive blood cells as different from yours and your body will make antibodies to fight the Rh-positive red blood cells.
- Rh-positive cells will not harm you or your first Rh-positive baby.
- If you get pregnant again and that baby is Rh-positive, the antibodies that are already in your body from the first pregnancy can cross the placenta and harm that baby. This is called Rh sensitization or isoimmunization.
- Rh sensitization is very rare because women who are Rh-negative get an injection called RhoGAM to prevent this process from happening.
- Your baby's blood type will be tested after birth using blood from the umbilical cord.

## WHAT IS RHOGAM?

- RhoGAM is a medicine that is given via injection that stops your blood from making antibodies that attack Rh-positive blood cells.
- RhoGAM has a very small amount of Rh-positive proteins that prevents your body from making permanent antibodies against Rh-positive blood.
- RhoGAM is safe and will not harm you or your baby. It has been used for 50 years and is recommended for all pregnant women who are a Rh-negative blood type.
- Not receiving RhoGAM could be dangerous for future Rh-positive babies.

## WHEN DO I GET RHOGAM?

- RhoGAM is given around 28 weeks gestation to protect you for the rest of your pregnancy and birth.
- RhoGAM lasts about 13 weeks.
- Your baby's blood type will be tested soon after birth via blood from the umbilical cord. If your baby has Rh-positive blood, you will receive another RhoGAM injection within 72 hours of giving birth.
- If your baby is Rh-negative, you will not receive an injection of RhoGAM.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OTHER REASONS I MIGHT NEED RHOGAM?**

- If you experience vaginal bleeding anytime during pregnancy. This includes early pregnancy bleeding that could be a sign of a possible miscarriage.
- RhoGAM works best if given within 72 hours of the possible exposure of Rh-positive blood.

## **WHERE DO I GET MY INJECTION OF RHOGAM?**

- We will provide you with an order to go to either UPMC Harrisburg Hospital or UPMC Carlisle Hospital.
- You will register with patient registration and go to the outpatient laboratory. They will draw your blood to confirm your blood type.
- You will then be directed to the Labor and Delivery Unit to receive your RhoGAM injection.
- The whole process usually takes at least an hour and may even take up to 2 hours, so it is important to plan accordingly.
- We will be notified that you have received your RhoGAM injection.

## **WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE OFFICE?**

- It is very rare that you would develop an allergic reaction to the injection of RhoGAM. If you would develop a fever or shortness of breath, please call the office.