

# Rh Immune Globulin

## Patient Information Sheet

### What is the Rh factor?

Each person's blood is described in 2 ways:

1. Blood group; this may be A, B, O, or AB.
2. Rh factor; this may be positive or negative.

The Rh factor is a small protein found on red blood cells.

- When this protein is present, the blood type is called Rh positive.
- When this protein is not present, the blood type is called Rh negative.

Most people (85%) have Rh positive blood. Whether you have the Rh factor or not has no effect on your overall health. A simple blood test can tell if you have Rh positive or Rh negative blood.

### Why is Rh Immune Globulin given?

If you have Rh negative blood and the baby has Rh positive blood, mixing of the different blood types may cause a problem. Without treatment, your body may make antibodies against the Rh factor from the baby's blood. This is the natural way your body takes care of itself against things that are "foreign" to it. If you both share the same Rh factor (both Rh positive or both Rh negative), this mixing will not be a problem.

These antibodies stay in your blood and could cause problems with any future pregnancies you have. The antibodies would "attack" the red blood cells of the baby in another pregnancy, if that baby has Rh positive blood. This is called Rh hemolytic disease.

*Treatment with Rh Immune Globulin can prevent your body from making these antibodies. This can protect your future pregnancies.*

### What is Rh Immune Globulin?

Rh Immune Globulin is a blood product made from donated human blood. WinRho and RhoGam are brand names for Rh Immune Globulin.

### When is Rh Immune Globulin given?

Rh Immune Globulin is given at about 28 weeks during your pregnancy. Another blood test will be done 4-6 weeks after the injection to make sure the Rh Immune Globulin is at the right level. If the level is not right you may need the injection to be repeated. The Rh Immune Globulin will not hurt the baby.

Rh Immune Globulin is also given to you after the birth of your baby, if the baby's blood group is Rh positive.

### What are the side effects of Rh Immune Globulin?

If you get an injection of Rh Immune Globulin, you may feel soreness in the muscle where the needle was given. You may also develop a slight fever. Other reactions including allergic reactions are rare.

Adapted from Women's Health Program-Women's Health Clinic, Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation, 1999.