

What Are the Possible Side Effects?

You may get some mild swelling or tenderness where the injection was given. Occasionally, a mild headache or chills may occur. It is extremely unlikely for you to have an allergic reaction.

The British Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have stated that no serious adverse reactions have been reported in women receiving Rh immune globulin. [In Canada - WinRho].

Could WinRho be Harmful to My Baby?

There are no reports that being given WinRho while pregnant is harmful to your baby. You can breastfeed after you have been given an injection of WinRho. It will not affect your baby.

How is WinRho Given?

WinRho is given as an injection. It is usually given into the muscle in your arm or leg. The injection will be given by a doctor, a midwife, or a nurse.

WinRho is given to Rh negative mothers twice. The first shot is given around the 28th week of pregnancy. The second shot is given within 72 hours after giving birth if your baby is Rh positive.

A dose of WinRho may also be given if a woman has a miscarriage, an amniocentesis, or any bleeding during pregnancy.

The Bottom Line

Rh antibodies can cause serious health problems in the fetus and newborn or complicate future pregnancies. Rh immune globulin (WinRho) prevents the mother's body from making Rh antibodies.

Rh Immune Globulin (WinRho) In Pregnancy and Postpartum

Information for Women who have Rhesus (Rh) Negative Blood

Blood Types and the RH Factor

Blood types are divided into major blood groups: Type A, Type B, Type AB and Type O. Blood types are also divided into two groups to describe whether or not the Rhesus factor is present. The Rhesus factor, sometimes called the Rh factor, is a protein that is present or absent on the surface of red blood cells. Most people (85%) have the Rh factor and are referred to as “Rh positive”. The other 15% of the population who do not have the Rh factor on their red blood cells are referred to as “Rh negative”.

Blood types and RH factor are inherited from our parents. If both parents are Rh negative, the baby will be Rh negative and there are no concerns. If the mother is Rh negative and the father is Rh positive the baby has a higher chance of being Rh positive.

When a mother is Rh negative and her baby is Rh positive, there can be health risks for that fetus (unborn baby) and the fetus of any future pregnancy.

What Could Happen?

Although a mother and her fetus do not share their blood, it is common for a small amount of fetal blood to mix with the mother’s blood during pregnancy and birth. This can also happen following certain events:

- miscarriage or abortion,
- amniocentesis test,
- turning a breech baby,
- any abdominal injury, such as in a motor vehicle accident.

If Rh positive blood from the fetus comes into contact with the mother’s Rh negative blood, there is a chance that the mother will produce antibodies to the Rh factor if left untreated. The mother is then said to be sensitized and she will always make antibodies to the Rh factor.

This is usually not a problem with the first pregnancy. However, if the fetus is Rh positive in a future pregnancy these antibodies can cross the placenta and destroy the red blood cells of the fetus. This can cause severe anemia (too few red blood cells). Severe anemia can result in fetal heart failure, brain damage or even death.

What Can Be Done?

The formation of antibodies in the mother’s system can be prevented.

If an Rh negative mother has not made Rh antibodies, an injection (a shot) of a blood product called Rh immune globulin can be given to the mother. The Rh immune globulin will stop her immune system from making antibodies to the Rh positive cells.

Since Rh immune globulin has become available in Canada, it is uncommon for babies to have severe anemia from this condition. Because of its use, the average midwife, family doctor or obstetrician in Canada will never have seen a case.

In Canada Rh immune globulin is produced in Winnipeg and is called “WinRho”. It is made from the part of blood called plasma. The plasma is very strictly tested for any infections. WinRho has never been associated with infections in the blood, such as HIV or hepatitis.