Intermountain® Healthcare

Rho(D) Immune Globulin Injections *(RhoGAM)*

What is it?

Rho(D) immune globulin is a medicine given by an injection (shot) into a muscle. It's often referred to by one of its brand names, RhoGAM.

Why do I need it?

If you're a pregnant woman with Rh-negative blood, and the baby's father has Rh-positive blood (or unknown type) your doctor may prescribe this medicine injection for you. **The injection can prevent a disease called Rh-induced hemolytic disease. This disease can harm the fetus you're carrying and any other fetus you may conceive.** The disease's effects on a fetus or newborn can be mild or serious, ranging from mild anemia and jaundice to mental retardation and death.

Rh-induced hemolytic disease is **caused by the incompatibility between your Rh-negative blood and a fetus's Rh-positive blood.** During pregnancy, fetal blood cells can enter your bloodstream through the placenta. When this happens, your immune system will treat the fetal Rh-positive blood cells as if they are harmful invaders and makes antibodies against them. If these antibodies pass back into your fetus through the placenta, they begin to destroy the fetus's blood cells.

A Rho(D) immune globulin injection stops your body from making antibodies. This protects your baby against Rh-induced hemolytic disease. Once you make antibodies, the antibodies are usually present for the rest of your life. These antibodies can cause serious problems for your future babies and serious problems if you were to need an emergency blood transfusion.

The timing of a Rho(D) immune globulin injections is important.

Your first injection must happen during pregnancy, before your body has begun to make antibodies. After your baby is born and had a blood test, you will need a second injection if your baby turns out to have Rh-positive blood.

Having an injection at the right time during or after a pregnancy can lower the risk of hemolytic disease for this pregnancy or any future pregnancies.

It's also possible that the injection can help protect your health. In an emergency it is much easier to give you a blood transfusion if you do not have antibodies to Rh-positive blood.

Potential Benefits	Risks and Potential Complications	Alternatives
An injection of Rho(D) immune globulin can prevent Rh-induced hemolytic disease in a fetus or newborn and thus **can protect against these possible disease effects:** • Jaundice • Anemia • Heart failure • Neurological problems such as mental retardation, hearing loss, speech and movement disorders, and seizures • Stillbirth or infant death	There are no known risks to a fetus when the mother has a Rho(D) immune globulin injection. Risks to the woman receiving this injection include: • Local side effects from the injection, such as pain or tenderness. • Side effects from the medication, such as muscle aches or pains; headache; feeling tired or light-headed; and nausea or vomiting. • Allergic reaction to the medication. • Infection with a virus or bacteria. (The medication is made from human blood, so even though it is screened and treated for safety, there is still a very small risk of blood-borne infection.)	You can choose not to have the Rho(D) immune globulin injection. • Understand that you cannot postpone your decision very long. For the medication to work, it must be given at the right time. • If you are pregnant, your baby will be closely monitored to gauge his health.