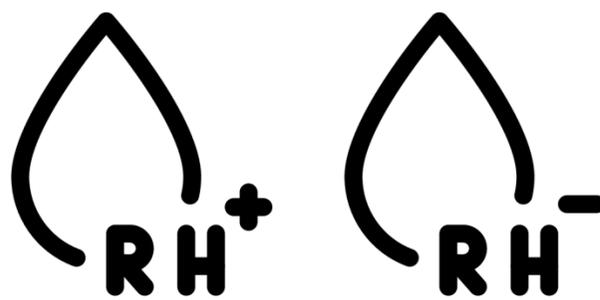


Facts about the RH Factor



Has anyone ever asked you “What is your blood type?” If you know your blood type, you may answer “O positive” or “A negative” or “B positive.” **This is a very important question if you are pregnant, even if you have a miscarriage, an ectopic pregnancy or an elective abortion.** Just as there are different major blood groups, such as type A and type B blood, there also is an “Rh factor”. The Rh factor is the type of protein found on the red blood cells. Most people have the Rh factor - *they are Rh positive*. Others do not have the Rh factor - *they are Rh negative*. Instead of saying, “I’m A, Rh negative”, we simply say, “I’m A negative”. A simple blood test can tell whether you are Rh positive or Rh negative.

The Rh factor causes problems when an Rh-negative person’s blood comes in contact with Rh-positive blood. During pregnancy, the woman and baby do not share blood systems. However, a small amount of blood from the baby (whether Rh-negative or Rh-positive) can cross the placenta into the woman’s system. These Rh-negative women become sensitized during their first pregnancy, if the baby is Rh-positive. The mother’s body makes antibodies that attack the blood of the Rh-positive baby in subsequent pregnancies. When this happens, the antibodies break down the baby’s red blood cells, which cause anemia and/or serious illness, brain damage or even death of the baby. The initial pregnancy and each subsequent pregnancy must be treated and in most cases, the condition becomes worse in later pregnancies.

A simple blood test can identify a woman's blood type and Rh factor. Another blood test, called an antibody screen, can show if an Rh-negative woman has developed antibodies to Rh-positive blood.

Whether you plan to have an elective abortion or carry your pregnancy to term, you need to have this simple blood test done because without treatment of the antibodies in your system, if you are Rh negative, any subsequent pregnancies will be adversely affected.

Contact your healthcare provider for more information on the Rh Factor. A referral can be given to you by our staff here at the Blue Ridge Women's Center.

Source - ACOG (American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology)