

Bleeding in pregnant rhesus negative women

What is it?

The four major blood types are A, B, AB and O. Each of these are either rhesus positive or rhesus negative. Rhesus negative means the blood does not have a protein known as 'D antigen' on the surface of your red blood cells. Being rhesus negative isn't usually a problem.

Being rhesus negative can be a problem if you are pregnant and your baby is rhesus positive. If you become pregnant, it is important to talk to your GP.

Any kind of bleeding in pregnant rhesus negative women is serious. Bleeding leads to the baby's blood cells mixing with your own. Bleeding can happen at any stage. Miscarriage, termination, trauma, birth and certain tests can cause blood cells to mix. Your body will attack the rhesus positive blood, this is called sensitisation. It can cause problems for future pregnancies.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Will this affect my baby?
- Can I do anything to prevent this?
- How will I know if I am sensitised?



What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about your health and the cause of your bleeding. If you are bleeding, your GP will refer you to be given an injection called 'Anti-D'. Anti-D stops your body from attacking your baby's rhesus positive blood. This should be given no later than 72 hours after the bleed.

If the bleed happens before 12 weeks, you may not need Anti-D. If you are less than 20 weeks, you will go to hospital for treatment. If you are more than 20 weeks, Anti-D will be given by the antenatal service.

If your body has already been sensitised, your GP will refer you to an antenatal clinic for monitoring.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may make a follow-up appointment to discuss your own and your baby's health. Your GP will want to see you if you get pregnant in the future.

What can I do?

See your GP as soon as you notice a bleed. Anti-D must be given within the first three days after bleeding. Talk to your GP about your blood type and the risks.

What supports are available?

SWSLHD Early Pregnancy Assessment Services (EPAS)

Visit the Health Resource Directory website to find contact details of an EPAS close to you. To access this service, you will need a referral from your GP.

SWSLHD Antenatal Clinics

Visit the Health Resource Directory website to find contact details of an Antenatal Clinic close to you. To access this service, you will need a referral from your GP.

Where can I learn more?

- Australian Red Cross Lifeblood - You and your baby - blood types: lifeblood.com.au
- Pregnancy, Birth and Baby - Rhesus D negative in pregnancy: pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs