



## Rh (D) factor, Red Blood Cell Antibodies and Rh Immune globulin

### Information for Rh-Negative Women<sup>1</sup> and Families July 2022

#### **KEYPOINTS:**

##### **WHAT IS RH FACTOR AND WHY IT MATTERS IN PREGNANCY?**

- Rh factor (D) is a protein present on the red blood cells of 70-95% of people depending on their race
- People who do not carry Rh factor on the red blood cells are called rh negative. It does not affect their health.
  - If an Rh negative person gets exposed to Rh positive Red cells from another person, they can form substances called antibodies which can destroy the Rh positive red cells. It is a part of our immune system protection response
- In pregnancy, there is mixing of the unborn babies' blood with mother. If the baby carries Rh factor on its red blood cells (Rh positive), mother can form antibodies which go to baby's blood circulation and break down its red blood cells (hemolysis).
- The baby can have health problems such as low hemoglobin (anemia) or yellow jaundice.

**Hemolytic disease can cause damage to baby's heart or brain due to low oxygen delivery with anemia or high levels of jaundice which is poisonous to brain. Babies can become very sick, suffer from long standing health problems or even die**

##### **HOW DO I FIND OUT IF I AM RH NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE?**

Your blood is tested in early pregnancy to find out your blood group and Rh status. This test is ordered by your healthcare provider.

##### **IF I AM RH NEGATIVE, CAN I FIND OUT THE RH STATUS OF MY BABY?**

Baby gets half of his genes from mother and half from father. If baby's father is positive for Rh, the baby can have red blood cells which are Rh positive and be at risk for hemolytic disease. We can test the baby's father or 'cell free fetal DNA' to find out the Rh status of the baby

##### **HOW CAN I PROTECT MY BABY FROM HEMOLYTIC DISEASE DUE TO RH FACTOR?**

- If you don't already have Rh antibodies in your blood, it is possible to stop Rh disease in your baby if you receive WinRho®.
- WinRho® is a blood product that is given whenever there is a chance of an Rh-negative pregnant woman forming antibodies. WinRho® is made from human blood and goes through all tests needed (for Hepatitis B, C and HIV) to make it safe to take.

##### **WHAT DOES WINRHO DO?**

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusivity

This information was written using language supporting women at the center of care. PRAMS is committed to respecting the rights of all people. This includes transgender, gender non-binary, and intersex people that may find this information helpful. Healthcare providers should have respectful conversation with patients about their gender identity and be sure that preferred gender pronouns are used to provide safe and appropriate care.

- WinRho® works by destroying the Rh-positive red cells that have been transferred from the unborn baby's blood to the pregnant woman's blood. If Rh positive red cells have been destroyed the pregnant woman will not form the harmful antibodies. WinRho® will not harm your baby.

#### HOW DO I GET WINRHO®?

- WinRho® is available at no cost to you. Your family doctor, midwife or OB can give it to you during pregnancy.
- It is injected into a muscle with a needle or into a vein through an intravenous (IV) line.
- You may require more doses if there is a high chance of the baby's blood mixing with you and if you deliver an Rh positive baby

#### WHEN SHOULD I HAVE WINRHO?

- At 28 weeks pregnant
- When you have an amniocentesis
- Bleeding or spotting during pregnancy
- Miscarriage or planned end of pregnancy (abortion)
- Within 72 hours of a delivery of a Rh positive baby
- Turning an unborn baby from breech to head first
- Trauma to a pregnant woman

**Please call your doctor immediately if you think you may have miscarried, have vaginal bleeding or if you have injured your belly in any way.**

*In any of these situations, we can check the amount of unborn baby's blood mixing with your blood to decide how much WinRho you need. This is called Fetomaternal hemorrhage or 'FMH' test*

**If your FMH test is negative, you will still need WinRho, but the dose will be lower!**

#### WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TAKING WINRHO TO ME AND MY BABY?

- WinRho® is given in small doses and if any gets into the baby's blood it will not harm your baby.
- It is also safe for you to take if you are breastfeeding.
- WinRho® cannot cause harm to the red blood cells of an Rh negative person.
- As with any needle, the muscle will probably feel sore.
- A few people get headache, fever, chills or nausea. You will be asked to stay for 20 minutes after your WinRho® injection, so that you can be watched for these signs.

**When in doubt, check it out!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**Contact your health care provider right away if you experience any of the following within 6 hours after getting WinRho**

- Fever over 38°C or chills
- Weakness, dizziness from low blood pressure or feeling light headed
- Fast heart rate
- Itching, rash or hives
- Shortness of breath

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHOOSE TO GET WINRHO?

Your healthcare provider will talk with you about the risks and benefits of WinRho® for you and your baby. This is a good time to ask any other questions you may have. You can write down your questions here to be ready to talk about WinRho®:

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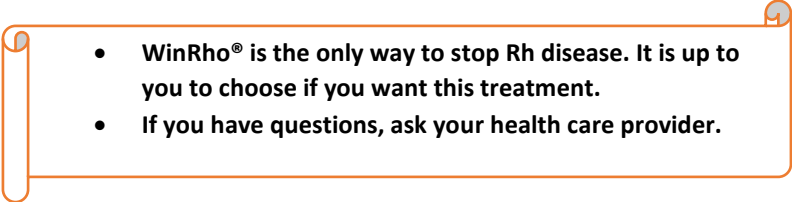
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## WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHOOSE NOT TO GET WINRHO?

Some people are not comfortable receiving any human blood product. If you have concerns about having this treatment, talk to your health care provider. You always have the choice to refuse any treatment.

It is important to understand that without WinRho®:

- There are no other effective treatments to prevent Rh disease. WinRho® is the only way to prevent Rh red blood cell problems (hemolytic disease) in babies.
- Rh problems get worse with each pregnancy you have for both you and your unborn baby.
- If you choose not to get WinRho® your healthcare provider will ask you to say so clearly and write down your choice.

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- **WinRho® is the only way to stop Rh disease. It is up to you to choose if you want this treatment.**
  - **If you have questions, ask your health care provider.**

### Important Note:

- WinRho® does NOT contain Mercury or other preservatives.
- WinRho® does NOT contain any red blood cells or other blood cells. Please review the information from JW Watchtower about WinRho® administration in Jehovah's Witnesses. <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/101994890>.
- It is important to still get WinRho® even if you are done having children because you could develop harmful antibodies that can affect what type of blood you would need in a future surgery/emergency.

**PRAMS** is a provincial program of the Saskatchewan Health Authority. PRAMS focuses on the *Prevention of Alloimmunization in Mothers of Saskatchewan* by supporting healthcare providers in their care of pregnant patients who are at risk of forming antibodies. PRAMS Registered Nurse Specialists can assist healthcare providers and their patients in understanding how to manage antibody risks during pregnancy. For questions or further learning, a PRAMS Nurse Coordinator can be contacted at [prams@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:prams@saskhealthauthority.ca) Permission to photocopy.

## ***Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan***

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

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