WHY EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW HER BLOOD TYPE

ALLO HOPE
FOUNDATION

Empowering you to protect your health and your family

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WHY YOUR BLOOD TYPE MATTERS

Women who know their blood type are more likely to receive the right medical care.

YOUR BLOOD TYPE HELPS YOU KNOW:

WHAT TYPE OF DONOR BLOOD IS SAFE IF YOU EVER NEED A BLOOD TRANSFUSION

Women with a negative blood type should receive Rh negative donor blood for blood transfusions.

WHAT TYPE OF PRENATAL CARE YOU NEED DURING PREGNANCY

Women with a negative blood type are at risk for developing **Rhesus Incompatibility (Rh Disease).** This requires special medical care during pregnancy.

HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS

If you have a negative blood type you can donate blood to help friends and family members who are also Rh negative and need blood transfusions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

to protect your health and your baby

Find out what your blood type is
If you don't know your blood type, use blood typing services at a nearby pharmacy, dispensary, or hospital to have your blood tested.

Continue reading
to learn more about Rh Incompatibility and how to have a safe pregnancy.

Connect with the O Negative Foundation
if you are Rh negative and need a blood transfusion or want to donate blood and save lives.
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Rhesus Incompatibility

Rh Incompatibility, also called **rhesus disease** or **maternal alloimmunization**, happens when an Rh negative woman is exposed to Rh positive blood through pregnancy or blood transfusion.

The woman's immune system reacts to the foreign blood by making anti-D antibodies.

These antibodies are not harmful to the woman, but during pregnancy they can destroy the baby's red blood cells, a disease called Hemolytic Disease of the Fetus and Newborn (HDFN).

Thankfully, Rh Incompatibility does not put the mother at risk.

What are the risks to the baby?

Before Birth

- Anemia
- Fetal Hydrops
- Organ Damage
- Heart Failure
- Death

After Birth

- Anemia
- High bilirubin
- Jaundice
- Brain damage
- Death

THANKFULLY THERE ARE WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR BABY FROM RH DISEASE

PROTECT
your baby from Rh disease

PREVENTION IS THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST RH DISEASE

If you have a negative blood type you can prevent Rh disease by receiving Rh Immunoglobulin (also called Anti-D injection) at 28 weeks and within 72 hours after giving birth.

Start attending reputable birth clinics in the first trimester.

Work together with your gynecologist to determine if your blood type requires further testing or treatment

Do I have Rh Incompatibility?

HAVE YOU SUFFERED UNEXPLAINED SECOND TRIMESTER MISCARRIAGES, STILLBIRTHS OR THE DEATH OF YOUR NEWBORN?

If you have a negative blood type, your losses could have been caused by Rhesus Incompatibility.

You can ask your doctor for an ICT (Indirect Coombs) test to find out if you have Anti-D antibodies.
If your test results are positive, it means you have Rh Disease/Incompatibility.

You can look at your baby's past medical records to see if your baby received a DCT (Direct Coombs) test after birth.
If the results were positive, it means your child was affected by Rh Disease

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ICT TEST HERE

(Scan with your phone camera)

I HAVE RH DISEASE
What do I do now?

Care for Rh Disease is rapidly improving.
THERE IS HOPE.

Ask your gynecologist for a consultation with a maternal fetal medicine specialist to discuss rhesus incompatibility and your treatment options

HELP IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE ALLO HOPE FOUNDATION

WE PROVIDE:

- ICT testing
- Referral to experienced medical providers
- Social support
- Educational resources
- Community support group for Rh negative women

HOW RH DISEASE
can impact the mother

Although Rhesus Disease doesn't harm the mother physically, it can cause problems in other areas of her life and wellbeing. Complications during pregnancy and after birth can be very stressful for the mother emotionally and financially.

It is common for mothers with Rh Disease to experience depression anxiety, guilt, grief and trauma, especially if you have experienced the loss of your baby.

False beliefs about pregnancy complications and Rh disease can cause even more problems for the mother, straining relationships and placing blame on the mother. It can be helpful to remember that:

RH DISEASE IS NOT YOUR FAULT.

Rh Disease is due to your partner's blood type and your blood type being incompatible.

Blood type is genetically inherited from your parents and is completely out of your control.

SUPPORT AND HELP ARE AVAILABLE
You are not alone

The Allo Hope Foundation provides social support for mothers with pregnancy complications from Rhesus Disease.

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JOIN OUR AHF AFRICA SUPPORT GROUP HERE

SIGN UP FOR A PEER SUPPORT GROUP

LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST ON GRIEF AND TRAUMA

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Parents who learn about this condition can better advocate for their babies. Arm yourself with knowledge and ask questions. We are here for you every step of the way. You are not alone.

1 WHAT IS the Rh factor?

Rh is a protein found on people's red blood cells. You either have the protein (Rh positive blood type) or you do not (Rh negative blood type). The Rh factor is genetic. This means it is inherited or passed down from your parents through genes. You cannot change your blood type. It is important to know your blood type and Rh factor as it can affect your baby during pregnancy, especially if you are Rh negative and your partner is Rh positive

2 WHAT IS Rhesus Disease?

Rhesus Disease, also called maternal alloimmunization occurs when a woman makes red blood cell antibodies after being exposed to a blood type different then her own. This is your body's immune system working the way it should. However, when you are pregnant, the antibodies can destroy your baby's red blood cells, a disease called Hemolytic Disease of the Fetus and Newborn (HDFN).

HDFN can cause anemia, a decreased amount of red blood cells, in the developing or newborn baby. This can cause issues with high bilirubin levels (jaundice or yellowing of the skin) and if untreated, hydrops (buildup of fluid) and/or death. Babies with HDFN often need phototherapy (special lights offered at some newborn care units) or blood transfusions for anemia. With the right care, these babies can often survive and do not need any treatment later than about 12 weeks of age.

3 WHAT CAUSES Rhesus Disease?

Blood transfusion, pregnancy including miscarriage or abortion, pregnancy bleeding, birth, invasive procedures (amniocentesis), and/or IV drug use can cause a mother to develop Anti-D antibodies, also called Rh disease or maternal alloimmunization.

4 HOW DO I Find out my blood type?

You and your partner can have tests to find out your blood type, if you are Rh positive or Rh negative and if your baby is at risk for Rh Disease. Pharmacies, dispensaries, and hospitals have blood typing services available. If you are Rh negative and your partner is Rh positive, you are at risk for Rh disease and should get the Anti-D injection to prevent Rh disease if you do not already have Anti-D antibodies (Rh disease).

If you are pregnant, you should have a blood test early in your pregnancy to determine your blood type. If you are Rh negative and have had multiple, unexplained pregnancy or newborn losses, you should also have an antibody screen or Indirect Coombs test (ICT) to determine if you already have antibodies in your blood.

5 HOW DO I KNOW IF I have Rhesus Disease?

In most cases, women don't know they have developed antibodies unless they have an antibody screen called Indirect Coombs Test. We can help you get this testing if you think you have Rh Disease.

6 HOW IS THIS Disease Treated?

If a pregnant woman is confirmed to have antibodies, she should receive medical care from an experienced doctor known as a maternal fetal medicine specialist. It is important to start going to a prenatal clinic in the first trimester.

Women with Rh incompatibility should be monitored closely during pregnancy with frequent blood tests to check her antibody levels (titers). If her antibody titer is 16 or above, she should receive specialized ultrasounds called MCA Doppler ultrasounds to monitor the baby for fetal anemia.

If the MCA Doppler ultrasound shows that your baby is anemic, a procedure called an Intrauterine Blood Transfusion (IUT), may be needed to give blood to the baby.

While ideal care is difficult to find in Kenya, we are encouraged to see many recent improvements for patients with Rh Disease. The Allo Hope Foundation has relationships with doctors who are working hard to support patients with Rh Disease. We can help you connect with these doctors and set up appointments with them for your care. High risk pregnancies can be costly, it is important to plan for this type of pregnancy care.

7 CAN YOU PREVENT Rhesus Disease?

Rhesus Disease can be prevented with an injection called Rh Immunoglobulin (also known as Anti-D and RhoGAM). This medication can help prevent your body from producing antibodies that can harm your baby when you are pregnant. Rh Immunoglobulin only works if you DO NOT already have antibodies.

If you are Rh negative and pregnant, you should receive Rh Immunoglobulin at 28 weeks of pregnancy, within 72 hours of birth and after any situation where your blood and your baby's blood mixes including miscarriage, abortion or pregnancy bleeding.

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WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The Allo Hope Foundation helps support mothers, babies and families affected by Alloimmunization and HDFN. We can provide antibody testing, referral to medical providers, social support, educational materials and Rh Immunoglobulin.

Please visit our website at
www.allohopefoundation.org

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