

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis for women who are rhesus D negative

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about when **routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis** should be used to treat pregnant women who are rhesus D negative in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for pregnant women who are RhD negative (rhesus D can be shortened to RhD) but it may also be useful for their families or anyone with an interest in how being RhD negative can affect pregnancy.

It does not describe pregnancy or the treatments for RhD-negative pregnant women in detail – your midwife or doctor should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.



This may not be the only treatment option for pregnant women who are RhD negative. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis is recommended as a treatment option for all pregnant women who are RhD negative and who are not known to be 'sensitised'.

When a decision has been made to give routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis, the treatment with the lowest cost should be used. This should take into account the costs of both obtaining and giving the treatment.

Pregnancy in RhD-negative women

People who are RhD positive have a substance known as D antigen on the surface of their red blood cells, whereas RhD-negative people do not. A woman who is RhD negative can carry a baby who is RhD positive if the baby's father is RhD positive. During pregnancy, or when giving birth, small amounts of the baby's blood can enter the mother's bloodstream. This can cause the mother to have an immune response to the D antigen – that is, she produces antibodies against it. This usually doesn't affect the existing pregnancy, but the woman becomes 'sensitised'. This means that if she falls pregnant with another RhD-positive baby, the immune response will be quicker and much greater. The antibody produced by the mother can cross the placenta and attach to the D antigen on the baby's red blood cells. This can be harmful to the baby as it may result in a condition called haemolytic disease of the newborn, which can lead to anaemia and jaundice.

Routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis

Prophylaxis is the word given to a treatment that is used to prevent something from happening. Antenatal anti-D prophylaxis can reduce the risk of an RhD-negative woman becoming sensitised, by preventing her immune response to the D antigen in the baby's blood. It is routinely given between 28 and 34 weeks of pregnancy, in one or two doses, to pregnant RhD-negative women who are not already sensitised (this can be confirmed with a blood test).

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you are pregnant and are RhD negative, you should be able to have routine antenatal anti-D prophylaxis on the NHS. If your doctor thinks this is the right option for you, you should be offered the type of treatment that is considered to be the least expensive.

Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for pregnant women who are RhD negative. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- The Miscarriage Association, 01924 200 799
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- NCT (National Childbirth Trust), 0300 33 00 772
www.nct.org.uk
- Sands, 020 7436 5881
www.uk-sands.org

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA156

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1668).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information for pregnant women who are RhD negative.