

Why should I know my blood type

The most common system classifies types of blood into the ABO group as shown in the following table.

Blood type	Compatible donor type
A	A, O
B	B, O
AB	A, B, AB, O
O	O

Type O people are universal donors for transfusions, but they can receive only type O blood themselves. Those who have type AB blood do not make any ABO antibodies. Their blood does not discriminate against any other ABO type. Consequently, they are universal receivers for transfusions, but their blood will be agglutinated when given to people with every other type because they produce both kinds of antigens.

RH factor

The blood contains proteins like any cell in the body, and it has an extra protein substance called Rh factor. Approximately 85% of all people have this protein called Rh positive (Rh+); the remaining 15% are Rh negative (Rh-). Example: a person with A group has Rh positive (A+).

If an Rh-negative person is transfused with Rh-positive blood, he/or she may develop antibodies against the Rh-positive factor

Clinically, the Rh factor, like ABO factors, can lead to serious medical complications. Mother-fetus incompatibility occurs when the mother is Rh- and the father is Rh+. Maternal antibodies can cross the placenta and destroy fetal red blood cells. The risk increases with each pregnancy. Rh type mother-fetus incompatibility occurs only when an Rh+ man fathers a child with an Rh- mother.

The first time an Rh- woman becomes pregnant, there usually are not incompatibility difficulties for her Rh+ fetus. However, the second and subsequent births are likely to have life-threatening problems. The risk increases with each birth, so any newly married couples should know their blood type to prevent any complication.

In case the baby has Rh+, the mother should be given an injection of Anti D intramuscularly after delivery, but if the baby has Rh- as the mother Rh-, no need for any intervention.

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Fundamentals of Nursing, Saunders Company, 2005