

# Immunoglobulin Patient Leaflet

**NATIONAL DATABASE CLINICAL WORKSHOP**  
LEAD AUTHOR AMANDA WOODALL

## **Your questions answered**

Information for patients and relatives

### **What is Immunoglobulin?**

Immunoglobulins are proteins produced by the immune system (the body's defence system) Immunoglobulin is made from plasma (plasma is the clear fluid part of our blood) which has been given by many blood donors. The Immunoglobulin protein is removed from the plasma and added to a solution which is used to treat your neurological condition.

All blood donors are carefully tested to make sure that they have no serious diseases that can be passed on – all are negative for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. However, it is impossible to eliminate the risk of passing on infection, for example an unknown virus.

### **What does Immunoglobulin do?**

Immunoglobulin is used in neurology to treat a number of conditions. It can help to calm down some inflammatory processes that affect muscle and nerve function.

### **How is Immunoglobulin given?**

Commonly immunoglobulin is given by injection into a vein (intravenous infusion) over several hours; this is usually done in hospital. Immunoglobulin can also be given by injection into the fatty tissue just under the skin (subcutaneous infusion); this can often be done independently at home.

### **Are there any side effects?**

As with all treatments side-effects can occur, these are usually mild and do not require treatment to be stopped. Side-effects to Immunoglobulin are often resolved by changing the rate of the infusion, drinking plenty of fluids and by taking a simple pain killer for example Paracetamol.

If possible you will be given the same brand of Immunoglobulin each time you have a treatment; this is to reduce the risk of an infusion related reaction. However, sometimes with supply difficulties another brand may have to be used.

Occasionally people having immunoglobulin occasionally may experience the following, during, or after the treatment

#### **Mild Reactions**

- A chill (cold like symptoms)
- Headache
- Stomach pain
- Fever
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Vomiting joint pain
- Tiredness

These mild symptoms are known as an infusion related reaction and will usually settle quickly. If they happen during treatment the infusion may be stopped or slowed down.

#### **Moderate Reactions**

In a few cases, people having Immunoglobulin may experience:

- A rash
- Abnormalities in liver or kidney function (detected by blood tests)

- Inflammation of the brain (aseptic meningitis)
- Hemolytic anaemia associated with intravenous immunoglobulin (reduction in red blood cells) occasionally your urine may change colour (darken) this should be reported to your treatment centre, a urine sample will be required.

### Rare reactions

Very rarely, people can have a severe allergic reaction. Symptoms can include:

- Breathing difficulties
- Chest tightness
- Severe rash
- Swelling of the face and tongue
- Drop in blood pressure.

If this happens medical attention will be given and treatment will be stopped until symptoms settle do

Having Immunoglobulin treatment can very rarely be linked with increased clotting of the blood- heart attack, stroke, and blood clots in the lung (pulmonary embolism) or legs (deep vein thrombosis, or DVT)

For that reason, it is important that you inform us if you are planning a long haul flight after Immunoglobulin therapy. A nurse will monitor you closely during treatment but please report any new symptoms during or after treatment. These reactions occur in a very small number of patients.

### Does immunoglobulin affect vaccinations?

Immunoglobulin may interfere with how the immune response following any vaccine and can make vaccines less effective. It is best to avoid vaccines for at least 6 weeks after Immunoglobulin treatment.

### Can I drink alcohol?

It is fine to drink alcohol in moderation, but you should avoid excessive consumption prior to treatment as dehydration may add to the risk of developing side.

### Will I need any special checks before or during treatment?

- Blood sample will be taken before we start treatment, and at each treatment for a number of months
- Your blood pressure, pulse, temperature will be monitored before and during your treatment.
- We will use a number assessment to measure your neurological symptoms

### Can I take any other medicines?

Immunoglobulin does not usually interfere with other medication. However, it is important that you tell your doctor which medicines you are taking, including over the counter remedies.

If you have any questions at any time please speak to your neurology doctor or specialist nurse. You can also visit <http://www.ivig.nhs.uk/>