

# Immune Globulin Fact Sheet

## What is Immune Globulin?

Immune Globulin (IG) is a sterile solution of naturally produced antibodies taken from donated human blood. IG is also known as immune serum globulin or gamma globulin.

Antibodies are proteins that a person's immune system makes to fight germs. IG is produced using small amounts of antibodies, given by an injection or needle. When injected into a muscle, IG can provide almost immediate, short-term protection against specific illnesses or help make the illness less severe.

## When is Immune Globulin used?

The two most common reasons for using IG are:

### Exposure to Hepatitis A:

Hepatitis A vaccine is given to individuals who have had contact with someone with hepatitis A infection. IG is given to individuals who are not able to receive the hepatitis A vaccine.

IG can prevent the spread of hepatitis A among people who are in close contact. This may include people in the same household, close non-household or daycare contact, or individuals who have sexual contact or share drugs.

In addition, IG can help prevent the spread of hepatitis A in the workplace among employees, such as food handlers. Sometimes, IG is recommended for people who have eaten food prepared by a food handler who has hepatitis A infection. IG works best if given as soon as possible - and no later than two weeks - after contact with someone who is contagious. For more information, see Vaccine Fact Sheet Hepatitis A Vaccine

### Exposure to measles:

IG can reduce or prevent measles. To prevent measles, IG should be given as soon as possible - within three days and no later than six days after exposure.

IG should be considered for all children less than one year and individuals who cannot be immunized against measles - for example, those who have a weakened immune system and pregnant women. For more information see Vaccine Fact Sheet Measles Vaccine

## How is Immune Globulin given?

IG is given by intramuscular injection. For adults, the injection (shot) is given in the large upper muscle of the hip; for children under five years of age, it is given in the thigh muscle.

## Does Immune Globulin cause any side effects?

Some possible side effects or reactions include soreness, redness, and stiffness of muscles around the injection site, which may last for several hours. Mild fever or general discomfort may also occur. Other less common symptoms that may occur include flushing, headache, chills, and nausea.

## Is Immune Globulin safe?

No transmission or spread of any viruses has been reported from receiving IG. IG is safe for those who have a weakened immune system. It is also safe for pregnant women and those who are breastfeeding.

## Possible vaccine reactions

With any vaccine or drug, there is a possibility of a shock-like allergic reaction or anaphylaxis. This can include hives, wheezy breathing, or swelling. If this happens, particularly swelling around the throat, immediately go to your family doctor or hospital emergency department.

It is suggested that persons stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization.

*Report serious or unexpected reactions to your family doctor or public health nurse.*

*NOTE: Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) can be given if fever or soreness is present after getting the vaccine. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) is NOT recommended for children.*

## What you should know about getting Immune Globulin

Persons vaccinated against measles, mumps, rubella, or chickenpox two weeks or less before receiving IG should have that vaccination repeated. Consult your doctor or public health unit for the appropriate timing for vaccines.

Persons getting IG should postpone vaccination against measles, mumps, rubella, or chickenpox. Ask your doctor or public health unit when these vaccines can be given.

## Warning

People with the following conditions must consult their doctor or public health nurse before receiving immune globulin:

- History of shock-like allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of IG, to latex, or to any of its components - IG components are thimerosal (a mercury preservative), a glycine stabilizer, and sodium carbonate or acetic acid, used to adjust the degree of acidity or alkalinity of the IG;
- A very low platelet count or other blood clotting disorder; or
- Isolated immunoglobulin A (IgA) deficiency - you could have a shock-like allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) after receiving blood products that contain IgA.

## **Mature minor consent**

While every effort is made to seek parental or guardian consent prior to immunizations, children under the age of 19 who are able to fully understand the risks and benefits may consent to or refuse specific immunizations, regardless of parental/guardian wishes. Appropriate steps are taken to avoid peer influence in these decisions. Parents/guardians and children are advised to discuss consent issues.