

Immune globulin

What is immune globulin?

Immune globulin (Ig) provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis A and measles infections. Ig contains antibodies taken from donated human blood. Antibodies are proteins that a person's immune system makes to fight germs, such as viruses or bacteria. Ig is approved by Health Canada.

Is immune globulin safe?

Yes. Ig is prepared from donated human blood that has been tested to ensure its safety. All blood donors are screened for exposure to viruses such as HIV and hepatitis. Each blood donation is also tested for the presence of blood-borne viruses before being used to make Ig. A number of chemical and physical steps are included when preparing Ig to inactivate and remove viruses and bacteria that can cause disease. The final preparation of Ig undergoes more testing to ensure that there are no known infectious viruses present.

There is an extremely small risk that some blood-borne infections could be passed on through the use of Ig. However, since blood screening and testing began, there have been no reports of blood-borne infections such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C in people who received Ig.

Who should get immune globulin?

Your health care provider may give you Ig if you have been exposed to hepatitis A or measles.

How is hepatitis A prevented after exposure?

Ig is given to people who are not immune to hepatitis A and are not able to receive the hepatitis A vaccine. This includes children less than 6 months of age and some people with weakened immune systems.

Ig works best if given as soon as possible, and within 14 days after the exposure to the hepatitis A virus.

If you have already received 2 doses of the hepatitis A vaccine, you do not need Ig. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #33 Hepatitis A vaccine](#).

How is measles prevented after exposure?

Ig is given to people who are not immune to measles and are not able to receive the measles vaccine, also known as the MMR vaccine. These include:

- Pregnant women
- Children less than 6 months of age
- Those with a weakened immune system

Ig works best if given as soon as possible, within 3 days but no later than 6 days, after exposure to a person with measles.

If you have already received 2 doses of the measles vaccine, you do not need Ig. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #14a Measles, mumps, rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#).

What are the benefits of immune globulin?

Ig provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis A and measles. It can prevent these infections or make the illness less severe.

What are the possible reactions after immune globulin?

Common reactions to Ig may include soreness and tenderness where the immunization was given. Allergic reactions (hives and swelling) may also occur.

Some immune globulins may be associated with a risk of thrombosis (blood clots) within 24 hours of receiving them, especially when large volumes are given. The risk of thrombosis is increased in those:

- 45 years of age and older
- With a history of thrombosis
- With risk factors for thrombosis

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Should this reaction occur, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get immune globulin?

Speak with your health care provider if you have:

- Had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any immune globulin or any of its components
- A condition called isolated immunoglobulin A deficiency
- A history of thrombosis or risk factors for thrombosis
- Been immunized against measles, mumps, rubella, or chickenpox within the past 14 days

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a virus that attacks the liver. Symptoms of hepatitis A may include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Some people, especially young children, may not have any symptoms. For every 1,000 people infected, 1 to 3 will die. The risk of dying from hepatitis A infection is higher in people 50 years of age and older.

What is measles?

Measles, also known as red measles, is a severe illness caused by the measles virus. It causes fever, rash, cold-like symptoms and red, inflamed eyes that can be sensitive to light. It can lead to infections of the ear or lungs (pneumonia). More serious complications, occurring in 1 person in 1,000, include encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. This can lead to seizures, deafness or permanent brain damage. About 1 person in 3,000 with measles can die from complications.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).

For more information on immunizations, visit ImmunizeBC at <https://immunizebc.ca/>.



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