

# PATIENT INFORMATION ON

# IV IMMUNOGLOBULIN

(Brand names: Intragam P<sup>®</sup>, Flebogamma<sup>®</sup>, Privigen<sup>®</sup>,  
Intratect<sup>®</sup>, Octagam<sup>®</sup>, Kiovig<sup>®</sup>, Gamunex<sup>®</sup>)

This information sheet has been produced by the Australian Rheumatology Association to help you understand the treatment that has been prescribed for you. It includes important information about:

- **how your treatment will be administered to you**
- **what are the possible side effects**
- **what tests you must have to monitor your condition and the effect of the treatment**

Please read it carefully and discuss it with your doctor.

## Important things to remember

- If you are worried about any possible side effects you should contact your rheumatologist as soon as possible.

## What is IV Immunoglobulin

Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) is a mixture of blood proteins called antibodies that are made by the immune system to fight infections. Immunoglobulins are extracted from healthy donated blood and are used to treat a number of medical conditions. IVIg is given to patients as an intravenous infusion.

## How does IVIg work?

In some medical conditions the body's immune system becomes overactive and

starts attacking a person's own body tissues, such as nerves, muscle or skin. IVIg is given to patients with these inflammatory conditions to reduce and alter the immune systems response.

## For which medical conditions is IVIg used?

IVIg has been shown to be beneficial in many medical conditions including certain inflammatory disorders and to treat patients who do not have sufficient antibodies.

Some examples of conditions where IVIg may be used:

- Inflammatory myopathy, such as polymyositis and dermatomyositis;
- Myasthenia gravis;
- Multifocal motor neuropathy;
- Kawasaki disease (a disease which results in multiple inflammations of several organs);
- Guillian Barré syndrome (a disease with multiple inflammations of the nervous system of the whole body);
- Lambert-Eaton myaesthenic syndrome (an autoimmune disorder causing muscle weakness in the arms and legs).

The above list of conditions are just some examples of the many medical conditions in which IVIg may be used. Ask your doctor if

you have questions about the use of IVIg in your particular condition.

### *How is IVIg given?*

IVIg is given as an intravenous (into a vein) infusion. At the beginning of the treatment, the infusion (the drip) will be set at a slow rate. Depending upon how comfortable you are, your doctor may then gradually increase the infusion rate.

### *How much IVIg is given?*

Your doctor will decide how much IVIg will be given to you. The dosage will vary depending on your condition and how much you weigh. The dosage may vary for different individuals. You may receive a different dose at each visit depending upon your condition.

Ask your doctor if you have questions about your dose of IVIg.

### *How many times will I be given IVIg?*

Your doctor will review your condition after your IVIg treatment and will decide if you need further doses.

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

You might experience side effects with your treatment. Tell your doctor as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are receiving treatment with IVIg.

#### *Most common possible side effects*

- The following reactions may occur at the site of the infusion (where the drip is put into your vein): redness, warmth, itching, swelling, mild or moderate pain, or bruising.
- Other common side effects that may occur during your IVIg infusion: headache, migraine, chills, mild fever,

tiredness, weakness, nausea, rash, increased heart rate, abdominal pain, dizziness or increased blood pressure.

#### *Less common or rare possible side effects*

Tell your doctor as soon as possible if you notice any of the following:

- Fever or other signs of infection;
- Chest pain or breathing problems;
- Night sweats;
- Reduced urination, sudden weight gain, or swelling in your legs. This could be signs of a kidney problem;
- Brown or red urine, fast heart rate, yellow skin or eyes. These could be signs of a liver problem or a blood problem.

If any of the following happen, tell your doctor immediately or go to the Accident & Emergency at your nearest hospital:

- Hives, swelling in the mouth or throat, itching, trouble breathing, wheezing, fainting or dizziness. These could be signs of a serious allergic reaction.
- Bad headache with nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, fever and sensitivity to light. These could be signs of irritation of the lining around your brain.
- Pain, swelling, warmth, redness or a lump in your legs or arms. These could be signs of a blood clot.
- Chest pain or trouble breathing, blue lips or extremities. These could be signs of a serious heart or lung problem.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist immediately if any of side effects you experience get worse, or if you notice any side effects not listed in this leaflet.

There are some differences in the rate of certain side effects between brands of IVIg. This is because different brands of IVIg may have different salt or sugar content, or may have other different excipients (additives).

Because IVIg is extracted from donated blood, it undergoes vigorous testing to check for possible viruses. There are additional procedures in the manufacturing to reduce the possible risk of viruses. Despite these stringent measures during the manufacturing process, the risk of contamination by viral and other unknown agents cannot be completely eliminated.

### **Use with other medicines**

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- You must tell your doctor if you are planning to get any vaccinations. IVIg may impair the effects of some live virus vaccines such as measles, mumps, rubella and varicella.

### **Use in pregnancy & breastfeeding**

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- You should tell your rheumatologist if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or if you are breastfeeding.
- Your doctor will consider the benefits and risks of using IVIg for your particular medical condition, if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

#### **Questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns write them down and discuss them with your doctor.

#### **Your doctor's contact details**

**If you are being treated with IVIg you should see your rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and to minimise any possible side effects.**

The information in this sheet has been obtained from various sources and has been reviewed by the Australian Rheumatology Association. It is intended as an educational aid and does not cover all possible uses, actions, precautions, side effects, or interactions of the medicines mentioned. This information is not intended as medical advice for individual problems nor for making an individual assessment of the risks and benefits of taking a particular medicine. It can be reproduced in its entirety but cannot be altered without permission from the ARA. The NHMRC publication: *How to present the evidence for consumers: preparation of consumer publications* (2000) was used as a guide in developing this publication.