

# 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 human blood. Antibodies are proteins your immune system makes to fight germs, such as viruses or bacteria. Health Canada has approved Ig.

## 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 blood-borne viruses before being used to make Ig. Several 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 no known infectious viruses are 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 after exposure to hepatitis A or measles.

## How can I prevent hepatitis A after exposure?

People receive Ig if they 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, within 14 days after 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 can I prevent measles after exposure?

People receive Ig if they are not immune to measles and are not able to receive the measles vaccine, also known as the MMR vaccine. These include:

- Pregnant individuals or those planning to become pregnant
- Infants less than 12 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 at the injection site. 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 injection, especially when large volumes are given. The risk of thrombosis increases for 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.

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 any risk factors
- Received the MMR or chickenpox vaccine within the past 14 days

### What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a preventable disease that affects the liver. Symptoms may include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, a sore feeling in the upper-right stomach area, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Some people, especially young children, may not have any symptoms. Even if a person does not have symptoms, they can still spread the virus to others. Most people recover completely with no lasting damage to the liver. Some older adults or people with other medical conditions may take longer to recover or have a more serious course of the disease.

### 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](#).



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