



## PATIENT FACT SHEET

# Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG)



### WHAT IS IT?

**Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG) is a therapy treatment for patients with antibody deficiencies.** It is prepared from a pool of immunoglobulins (antibodies) from the plasma of thousands of healthy donors. Immunoglobulins are made by the immune system of healthy people for the purpose of fighting infections. While IVIG is obtained from plasma (a blood product), it is so purified that the chances of contracting a blood-borne infection are extremely low.

Unlike many of the medications prescribed by rheumatologists, IVIG does not increase the risk for infection. IVIG works in different ways to prevent the

body from attacking itself and to decrease several types of inflammation in the body. It is considered safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

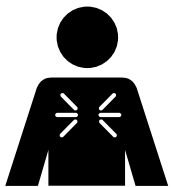
IVIG is used for certain rheumatologic diseases including Kawasaki's disease in children. It also may be employed in the treatment of inflammatory muscle diseases including dermatomyositis, polymyositis and juvenile dermatomyositis. It may be used for very low platelet counts (idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura) in those with systemic lupus erythematosus. It can be useful in the treatment of several other conditions as well.



### HOW TO TAKE IT

**IVIG is given as an intravenous infusion (through a vein in the arm), which takes several hours to complete.** Frequency of infusions may vary according to the patient's need. It may be given as a one-time infusion, such as for Kawasaki's disease. For other

diseases, it may be given from anywhere between one to five days on a monthly basis. Frequency and duration of infusions depend on the underlying disease and the clinical course. IVIG can take several weeks to fully take effect.



### SIDE EFFECTS

**Most people do well with IVIG, experiencing only minor side effects.** IVIG may cause infusion reactions, including fevers, chills, flushing, rash, muscle aches and nausea. Headaches are also relatively common. These are generally not severe and improve with analgesics and antihistamines.

Rarely, IVIG may cause aseptic meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain without an infection). The use of medications like steroids, non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs), acetaminophen, and diphenhydramine and staying well hydrated can help to prevent these

complications. Among patients who have certain forms of IgA deficiency, a severe allergic reaction to IVIG can occur.

In formulations of IVIG with high sugar content, the sugar level in the blood may be affected transiently following an infusion. This can often be avoided by slowing down the infusions and hydrating the body well.

Additionally, because the medication has a large volume, it may worsen heart failure and may cause the blood pressure to be elevated temporarily. IVIG also increases the risk for blood clots slightly when given in high doses.



### TELL YOUR DOCTOR

**If you develop a severe reaction, or have severe and persistent headaches, tell your physician.** Severe reactions include difficulty breathing, chest tightness, wheezing, rash, fevers. While some reactions may occur while IVIG is being administered, others occur within a few hours to days after the infusion.

While vaccines are not contraindicated while on therapy with IVIG, your body may not be able to fully respond to the vaccines. Talk to your doctor about the best time to receive immunizations. In addition, certain blood tests (that rely on checking for an antibody in the blood) performed while on therapy with IVIG may be inaccurate.