Immune Globulin
Information Sheet for Prevention of Measles

What is measles?
Measles (red measles) is a highly communicable viral disease, which spreads easily from one person to another. Measles occurs throughout the world and remains a serious and common disease. Measles does occur in Canada, generally in people who have travelled to countries where there is measles disease, and occasionally, Canada has measles outbreaks. For every 1,000 people who get sick with measles, one person will get inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) that can lead to convulsion, deafness or mental disability. In developed countries like Canada, for every 1000 people who get measles, one or two people will die. Measles can increase the risk of miscarriage and premature delivery in pregnant women.

How is measles spread?
Measles is spread through the air when someone with measles coughs, sneezes or talks or by contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons. Measles is very contagious and spreads easily from person to person.

What are the symptoms of measles?
Symptoms of measles include:
- fever
- cough
- runny nose
- eye irritation
- rash (most often begins on the face, spreads to the trunk and then to the arms and legs)
- Koplik spots (white spots on the inner lining of the mouth)

Measles can lead to ear infections, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death.

How can measles be prevented?
Measles-containing vaccine can protect children and adults from measles disease. In Canada measles vaccine is available in combination with mumps and rubella (MMR) and mumps, rubella and varicella (MMR-Var). In some countries measles vaccine is given alone.

What is immune globulin?
Immune Globulin (Ig) is a sterilized blood product prepared from human blood plasma which contains concentrated amounts of IgG antibodies and small amounts of IgA and IgM antibodies. Antibodies are substances created in the blood to fight infections. Ig is given to a person that may have been exposed to measles virus to help them fight off this infection. The person will have immediate protection, but this lasts only a short time. Ig should be given as soon as possible after an exposure to be most effective.

Is immune globulin safe?
Immune globulin is among the safest blood products available. Canadian Blood Services carefully screens donors and tests all blood plasma collected. In addition, the product is treated with heat and chemical processes to eliminate any other germs in case they are missed during the screening process. Ig does not contain any preservatives.
Who should get immune globulin?
Immune globulin is used to prevent or reduce the severity of measles disease. Ig may be recommended for the prevention of measles disease for people who may have been exposed to measles but do not have protection and:

- are less than 1 year of age, or
- are pregnant, or
- are immunocompromised, or
- are not able to safely receive measles vaccine

Talk to your public health nurse or health care provider for more information.

Who should not have immune globulin?
Immune globulin should not be given to anyone who has:

- a history of severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to an immune globulin or any of its components
- had an unusually severe reaction to an immune globulin in the past
- any disorder that would contraindicate intramuscular injection (i.e., severe thrombocytopenia)
- an isolated IgA deficiency

People, who have received a live vaccine (e.g., measles, mumps, rubella or varicella containing vaccine) in the 14 days before receiving Ig, may need to have this vaccine dose repeated. Those who receive Ig should postpone receiving measles, mumps, rubella or varicella containing vaccine for up to 6 months or longer, after receiving Ig because Ig may interfere with the development of antibodies to these specific live vaccines. Talk to your public health nurse or health care provider for more information.

What are the possible side effects to immune globulin?
Most people have no reactions to the product. Reactions that do occur are typically mild. Possible reactions include:

- swelling, redness or pain at the injection site
- itchiness

As with any injection, unexpected or unusual side effects can occur. This includes severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

What should you do if you have a reaction to immune globulin?

- apply a cool moist cloth where the needle was given to reduce the pain and swelling
- take a medication such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) to reduce the pain.
  - Aspirin® (ASA) is not recommended for individuals younger than 19 years of age
- report any unusual reactions to Health Link Alberta

For health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call Health Link Alberta at:

- 403-943-5465 in Calgary
- 780-408-5465 in Edmonton
- Toll free 1-866-408-5465 elsewhere in Alberta

Or visit www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca for health information online.

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