

Immune Globulin (IG)

Get protected, get immunized.

- Immune globulins are passive immunization agents. This means they give quick, short-term protection.
- For long-term protection, you need a vaccine.

What is immune globulin (IG)?

IG is made from blood and contains antibodies.

IG gives fast protection against measles and hepatitis A, but the protection is not long lasting. For long-lasting protection, you need to be immunized with vaccine that protects against measles or hepatitis A.

What is measles?

Measles is a virus that spreads easily through the air when someone who has measles coughs, sneezes, yells, sings, or breathes. It can cause:

- a high fever
- a cough
- a runny nose
- red eyes
- a rash that appears 3 to 7 days after the fever starts. The rash usually starts behind the ears and on the face, then it spreads to the body, arms, and legs. The rash looks red and blotchy on lighter skin. On darker skin, the rash may look purple or darker than the skin around it, or it might be hard to see.

Measles can be dangerous because:

- One in 10 people with measles will get middle ear or lung infections.
- One in 1,000 people with measles will get encephalitis (swelling of the brain), which can lead to seizures, deafness, or brain damage.
- One to three of every 1,000 people with measles could die.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is an infection in the liver that is caused by the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms include poor appetite, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting (throwing up), feeling tired, fever, and jaundice (yellow skin and eyes). The symptoms can be serious and last for months.

See reverse for more information.

One out of 4 adults who get hepatitis A need to be admitted to a hospital. It is rare, but you can die from hepatitis A. You are at high risk for serious illness from hepatitis A if you:

- have other liver problems
- have a weak immune system
- are older than age 60 years

Hepatitis A spreads through infected stool (poop) by getting onto hands or into food and water, and then into the mouth.

Who should get IG?

You may get IG **after contact with measles** if you are unprotected and at risk for serious illness. For example, you could be at risk for serious illness if you have a weak immune system, you are pregnant, or you are under 1 year of age.

You may get IG **after contact with hepatitis A** if you are younger than age 6 months or you are unprotected and at risk for serious illness. For example, you could be at risk for serious illness if you have liver disease, a weak immune system, or you are older than age 60 years.

How many doses do I need?

You need 1 dose of IG **as soon as possible** after contact with measles or hepatitis A. The dose of IG needs to be given within a certain time after contact with measles or hepatitis A.

How well does IG work?

If you have had contact with hepatitis A or measles, IG helps prevent the disease or helps prevent serious illness if you do get the disease.

Is IG safe?

IG is one of the safest blood products available. The risk of getting an infection from IG is very small. Canadian Blood Services carefully screens donors and tests all blood. Blood is not used if the donor has risk factors or tests positive for an infectious disease. IG is treated with heat and chemicals to kill germs.

Where can I get IG?

If you think you have had contact with hepatitis A or measles, call Health Link at 811 or your healthcare provider. If you need IG, you will be told where to go to get it.

Are there side effects from IG?

There can be side effects from IG, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness where you had the needle that may look red on lighter skin or purple on darker skin
- feeling sore, or feeling stiff where you had the needle
- feeling unwell
- a fever

It is important to stay for 15 minutes after you have IG. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

How can I manage side effects?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your healthcare provider if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their healthcare provider if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your healthcare provider even if you think the fever is from IG.

Who may not be able to get IG?

Talk to your healthcare provider before getting IG if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the immune globulin. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any allergies you may have.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this immune globulin or one like it.
- You have low or no immunoglobulin A in your blood (IgA deficiency).

You can still have IG if you have a mild illness such as a cold or fever.

What vaccines protect against measles and hepatitis A?

For long-term protection you need to be immunized with a vaccine that protects against measles or hepatitis A.

Vaccines that protect against measles:

- MMR-Var vaccine protects against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella (chickenpox). As part of the routine immunization schedule, children get this vaccine starting at age 12 months up to and including 12 years.
- MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. Children and adults who have not had the recommended number of doses of measles, mumps, or rubella vaccine can get this vaccine.

Vaccines that protect against hepatitis A:

- HAV vaccine protects against the hepatitis A virus. People get this vaccine if they have liver problems or for travelling.
- Twinrix vaccine protects against the hepatitis A and B viruses. People often get this vaccine when they travel.
- Vivaxim vaccine protects against hepatitis A and typhoid infections. People who are travelling to areas where there is risk of hepatitis A and typhoid may get this vaccine.

Can IG affect any other vaccines I have had?

IG can interfere with live vaccines, including vaccines to prevent measles. Before getting a live vaccine tell your health care provider if you had IG in the past 11 months.

If you had a live vaccine less than 14 days before having IG, ask a public health nurse if you need to get the live vaccine again.

I have a fear of needles. How can I prepare for my immunization?

Many adults and children are afraid of needles. There are things you can do before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort, or call Health Link at 811 for information.

For more information about immunization



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Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize