

# Immune Globulin (IG)

## Get protected, get immunized.

- **Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases.**
- **Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get these diseases.**

### 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 or sneezes. It can cause:

- a high fever
- a cough
- a runny nose
- red eyes
- a blotchy rash

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.
- Two to 3 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 tired, fever, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice). The symptoms can be serious and last for months.

One out of 4 adults need to be admitted to a hospital and, in rare cases, infection can cause death.

You are at high risk for serious illness from hepatitis A if you:

- have other liver problems
- have a weak immune system
- are over the age of 60 years

Hepatitis A spreads through infected stool 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 the measles virus 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 the hepatitis A virus if 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 under 6 months of age.

### How many doses do I need?

You need 1 dose of IG as soon as possible after contact with the measles or hepatitis A virus.

### How well does IG work?

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

### Is IG safe?

IG is one of the safest blood products available. 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 diseases. IG is treated with heat and chemicals to kill germs. The risk of getting an infection from IG is very small.

### Where can I get IG?

If you think you have had contact with hepatitis A or measles, call Health Link at 811.

If you need IG, you will get it at your local public health office.

## 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, feeling sore, or feeling stiff where you had the needle
- feeling tired or unwell
- fever

It is important to stay at the clinic 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 doctor or pharmacist 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 doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor even if you think the fever is from IG.

## Who should not get IG?

Talk to your healthcare provider before getting IG if you:

- have an allergy to any part of the immune globulin
- had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this immune globulin or one like it
- have low or no immunoglobulin A in your blood (IgA deficiency)

Check with your doctor or public health nurse before you get IG.

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). Children can get this vaccine at age 12 and 18 months.

- **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 who travel often get this vaccine.
- **Vivaxim** vaccine protects against the hepatitis A virus and the bacteria that causes typhoid fever. Some people who travel 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. You can do many things before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit [ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort](https://ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort), or call Health Link at 811 for information.

## For more information about immunization



Call Health Link at **811**



Scan the QR code or go to [ahs.ca/immunize](https://ahs.ca/immunize)