



# IG Patient Guide

- **What is Immunoglobulin Therapy?**
  - Immunoglobulin [ee-mu-no-GLOB-u-lin] is a substance made from human blood plasma. The plasma, processed from donated human blood, contains antibodies that protect the body against diseases, including immunological and neurological conditions. When you are given an immunoglobulin, your body uses antibodies to help prevent illness. The immunoglobulins are purified upon being donated so that they can be safely given the person who receives them. The FDA controls the manufacturing of IgG and has rated the risk of transmission by plasma-derived products to be extremely low. In fact, there have been no reports cases of diseases transmitted by IgG for more than a dozen years.
  
- **How do I receive IG Therapy?**
  - There are three methods of administration for IG therapy:
    - **Intravenous** [in-tra-VEEN-us] or through the vein
    - **Subcutaneous** [sub-cue-TAY-nee-us] or under the skin
    - **Intramuscular** [in-tra-MUS-cu-lar] or into the muscle
  - The majority of patients receive IG intravenously due to fewer restrictions regarding volume or dose. This guide will focus mainly on intravenous (IV) and subcutaneous (SC) IG infusions.
  
- **What happens after my doctor has recommended me for IG therapy?**
  - An OptionOne nurse and customer representative will contact you on the same day that your doctor refers you for IG therapy. These calls will be to welcome you onto our services and to answer any reimbursement or clinical questions you may have.
  - We will begin by verifying details such as your birth date, address, phone number, etc. followed by an in-depth analysis of your insurance benefits.
  - Upon verifying your insurance benefits, a customer service representative will reach out to you with information regarding the financial specifics of your individual therapy.
  - Our nursing department will work with you to schedule a specialty infusion nurse to come to your home and either administer or teach you and/or your caregiver to administer your IG therapy. We are also willing and able to accommodate you in one of our clean and comfortable infusion suites.

The clinical staff will also coordinate the delivery of your medications from our pharmacy.

- **Will my insurance company pay for me to receive IG therapy?**
  - Many insurance companies pay for IG therapy for a multitude of varying diagnoses.
  - Most insurance companies will require Prior Authorization or Pre-Determination before they agree to pay for your IG therapy.
  - “Prior authorization” is a simple check run by insurance companies before they will approve the coverage of certain prescribed medications or medical procedures. It involves submitting your doctor’s prescription for IG therapy as well as applicable clinical information. Please be aware that prior authorization can take anywhere from 4 to 7 business days.
  - Predetermination is similar to prior authorization as it allows services or treatment to be reviewed for medical necessity. In this process, benefit coverage is predetermined before services are rendered and any limitation under a plan can be addressed before services are provided. Predetermination is a more in-depth process and can take anywhere from 2 weeks to 30 days.
  
- **What if I cannot afford my IG therapy?**
  - We understand that IG therapy is costly. We will automatically check your eligibility for copay assistance programs. Upon your request, we will also review your financial information to see if you qualify for our economic assistance program.
  
- **The Basics of an IG Therapy Prescription**
  - Dosing- Your doctor and our pharmacy team will work together to determine a dose that is appropriate for your diagnosis, body weight and other medical conditions.
  - Infusion Rate- The infusion rate is the speed at which the medication will be administered. Your doctor, pharmacist and nurse will consider many factors to set a rate that allows you to receive the medication in a safe and timely manner. Our nurses will carefully monitor the infusion rate for MIG to minimize the risk of an infusion reaction and side effects. For SCIG your rate will be monitored on an ongoing basis to prevent adverse drug reactions.

- **How long will my IG infusion last?**
  - The length of your IG infusion is dependent upon the dose and rate set by your doctor, pharmacist and nurse. IG visits can last anywhere from 2 to 8 hours. In general, the higher the dose the longer the infusion takes.
  
- **How often will I need to receive IG Therapy?**
  - On average, patients with immunodeficiency-related conditions can expect to receive IVIG therapy every 21-28 days or every 7-14 days for SQIG. Patients with autoimmune related conditions can expect to receive IG for up to several days in a row and then to repeat the treatment anywhere from four weeks to several months later.
  
- **How long will I be on IG Therapy?**
  - In many cases, you may be placed on IG therapy for your entire lifetime. If this happens, you are not alone. Many people are able to live healthy, active lives while on IG therapy. In other cases, your condition may get better and your IG therapy may be discontinued. Your doctor will make this determination based upon test results, lab work and clinical assessment.
  
- **What to expect during your IVIG Therapy**
  - A nurse will conduct a therapy specific assessment in order to monitor clinical progress and ensure that you are able to receive the infusion.
  - Your trained nurse will place an IV prior to preparing the medication for your infusion. Premeds will be administered.
  - A special pump programmed specifically for the infusion is typically used to move fluid from a sterile bag or vial through plastic tubing and a small catheter into a vein in your arm.
  - Your nurse will be present for your entire infusion and will routinely check vital signs to monitor progress and check for any medication reactions.
  - Labs will be drawn as ordered.
  
- **What to expect during your SCIG Therapy**
  - A nurse will conduct a therapy specific assessment to monitor clinical progress and ensure that you can receive the infusion.
  - Your nurse will train you and/or your caregiver to prepare your medication for your SC infusion, place your SC needle(s) and administer the medication.
  - A special pump is used to move fluid from a sterile vial or syringe into your SC space.
  - You may need to have a caregiver present during your SCIG infusions.

- **How to prepare for an IG Infusion**

- Proper hydration is key to ensuring a positive infusion experience. Plan to drink 6-8 glasses of water the day before, the day of and the day after your infusion.
- Alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea, energy drinks and colas are NOT recommended. These fluids tend to pull water from the body and promote dehydration.
- Also, eating a well-balanced meal the day before and also day of your infusion will help the process. Consider foods with whole grains and supplement with fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products.
- Your referring doctor may have prescribed you premedication, which is medication taken prior to your IG treatment. It is important to take this medication as prescribed, as it will help decrease or prevent common side effects of treatment. Medications such as antihistamines (Benadryl®, Claritin®, Dimetapp® etc.), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (Advil®, Aleve®, ibuprofen, Motrin®, etc.) and in some cases corticosteroids (hydrocortisone, prednisone, etc.) may also help to avoid side effects.
- Try to proceed with your normal daily activities as best you can. The nurse will guide you on your recommended activity level, should you have any questions.
- You may be receiving treatment for several hours, so having something to pass the time is useful. Many patients find that reading books or magazines, doing crossword puzzles or even watching TV is helpful during their infusion.
- Every patient responds differently when undergoing intravenous IG therapy. Some patients report feeling tired during or after their infusion while others have no complaints.

- **What happens if I have a reaction to the IG?**

- Most reactions to IVIG occur within the first 30 to 60 minutes of the infusion and are generally mild. Reactions are usually related to the rate of the infusion, so should a reaction should occur your nurse will most likely slow or stop the infusion for 15 to 30 minutes. This may help alleviate the symptoms making you feel better, and then the infusion can be restarted.
- The most common reactions to SCIG are site (of the injection) reactions, such as redness and/or swelling.
- The most common side effects of IVIG and SCIG therapy are headache, nausea/vomiting and fever/chills. A more complete list of common side effects are listed below:
  - Headache (most common)

- Nausea/vomiting
- Back or abdominal pain
- Fever/chills
- Blood pressure changes
- Dermatitis (skin inflammation)
- Muscle aches
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness/pain
- Allergic reactions

If you experience any of these side effects please contact your OptionOne pharmacist or nurse.

- In the rare case of a more severe reaction, epinephrine will be administered and a standard emergency protocol will be followed.
- **Should I still receive my IG infusion if I am sick?**
  - Depending on the illness, you may still be able to receive your IG infusion when you are sick. While being sick is not always a reason to delay intravenous IG infusion, postponing treatment is best if you are running a high fever. If you feel you might be sick leading up to a scheduled infusion date be sure to consult your doctor and let an OptionOne nurse or pharmacist know your condition.
- **Is it safe to receive an IG infusion if I have other medical conditions?**
  - Our pharmacists and nurses review your medical history, current medication regimen and your prescriptions to ensure that you are a good candidate for IG therapy. For this reason, please share as much information as possible with your doctor, pharmacist and nurse so that we can make the most informed decision possible.

# Staying healthy while undergoing IG therapy

In addition to your IG therapy, there are other factors you might consider that can impact your overall health, such as the following:

## **PRIORITIZING THE DAY**

With some careful planning, you can more easily accomplish everyday tasks.

- Most people have a time a day when they feel they have the most energy - for some that is in the morning and for others it might be the afternoon. Listen to your body, and try doing the most difficult or most important tasks at the time when you have the most energy.
- Look at your to-do list and eliminate anything that isn't absolutely necessary. Asking friends or family for assistance might allow you more time to rest.
- Try breaking down large tasks into smaller ones. Sometimes, large tasks can feel overwhelming and add additional stress. By breaking things down into smaller tasks, large to-do items can become more manageable.

## **MANAGING STRESS**

Stress can cause mental and physical fatigue and leave you feeling wiped out. Learning how to control worry and anxiety can help you feel better.

- Talk to a counselor or join a support group specific to your condition, people there will provide information about how others have deal with your condition.
- Don't be afraid to ask your doctor, nurses or pharmacists questions about your IG treatment.
- Know yourself, and try to avoid situations that cause you to become stressed. Also, find small ways to relax during the day such as sitting in a park, gardening or taking a walk.

## **EXPRESSING EMOTIONS**

It's normal for people with health concerns like yours to feel depressed, angry, scared or even helpless. Sharing those emotions with friends, family or others you feel close to is an important part of dealing with your condition. But know that not everyone will respond to your emotions in the same way, and not every loved one will be able to provide the kind of emotional support you need all the time. Though it may feel difficult at first, it's important to ask others for help. Don't be embarrassed to seek assistance – your family and friends want you to be well and are often willing to help. They may be able to assist you with many things, like running errands, childcare, preparing meals or driving you to and from doctor's appointment.

## **FOLLOWING A HEALTHY DIET**

A nutritionally balanced diet will ensure that you are getting the proper amounts of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients as your body copes with your condition. Good nutrition provides the body with adequate energy and resources to fight off infections. It is important for you to take extra care to maintain a healthy and well-balanced diet, as your body works hard to reduce your risk of illness.

## **GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP**

Getting enough sleep is important in managing your condition. It can be difficult to get as much rest as your body needs, but you should think of rest as an important part of your treatment and schedule it into your routine each and every day. Rest allows for the body time to recover, which is an important part of a treatment plan.

- Aim for at least eight hours of sleep each night.
- Take short naps during the day if you feel tired.
- At bedtime, eliminate distractions, such as the TV or cellphone to allow for more restful sleep.
- If you wake up often during the night or you have trouble falling asleep, tell your doctor or nurse so they can help you with solutions.

## **SEEKING OUT COUNSELING/THERAPY**

Even if your family members are very supportive, you may still want to share your concerns and express your feelings in a setting away from home. Talking with others can help improve how you feel. Support groups can provide a sense of community and offer practical advice about how to deal with your condition. There are many types of support groups. However, you may feel that certain issues lend themselves best to a one-on-one conversation. Talking with a counselor or therapist on your own may make it easier to share concerns that seems more personal or private. Your doctor will be able to help you find a support group for your condition, or give you a referral to a counselor who is experienced in talking with patients with medical conditions like yours.

## **WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST**

Be sure to call your doctor and pharmacist if any unusual symptoms should occur or for any questions you might have. Whether you're new to this therapy or just a new patient of ours, we understand that you might have questions about how home infusion works and what our staff can do for you and we're always happy to help answer those questions. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions we receive and their answers. We hope you'll find them helpful.