



Immune globulin (IG)

How It Works

Immune globulin (IG) contains antibodies that destroy the hepatitis A virus (HAV), preventing infection.

Why It Is Used

IG should be given to unvaccinated people at risk of infection with HAV, including:

- Household and sexual contacts of people diagnosed with hepatitis A.
- Travelers visiting foreign countries where hepatitis A is a known problem or where sanitary conditions are questionable. Revaccination with IG is needed every 3 to 5 months. If a person frequently travels to or plans to stay for longer than 3 months in a country where hepatitis A is a problem, it is recommended that he or she receive the hepatitis A vaccine. For more information, see the Prevention section of the topic Hepatitis A.
- All staff and residents of child care centers, hospitals, residences for the developmentally disabled, prisons, or food service settings where an outbreak of hepatitis A occurs.
- People who need protection against HAV infection but are allergic to the vaccine.
- Children younger than age 1 who need to be protected against HAV infection.

How Well It Works

If given within 2 weeks of exposure to the virus, immune globulin (IG) is more than 85% effective in preventing hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection.¹

Immune globulin has been effective in controlling some outbreaks of HAV.

Side Effects

Common side effects include:

- Soreness and swelling around the injection site.
- Low-grade fever.
- In rare cases, a life-threatening allergic reaction may occur. This is more likely if IG is accidentally injected into an artery or vein.

What To Think About

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended instead of IG for healthy international travelers aged ≤ 40 years regardless of their scheduled dates for departure.

For older adults, immunocompromised persons, and persons with chronic liver disease or other chronic medical conditions who are traveling to an area within 2 weeks, the updated recommendations for international travelers state that for optimal protection, IG should be considered **in addition** to Hepatitis A vaccine.

Immune globulin (IG) is a safe, inexpensive, and effective means of preventing the spread of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection.

The sooner you get a shot of IG after being exposed to HAV, the greater the likelihood that infection will be prevented.

IG is safe for women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.

IG protection is only temporary, lasting about 3 months. If you are planning to stay longer than 3 months in an area where hepatitis A is a problem, you should receive a higher initial dose of IG, or you should get the hepatitis A vaccine (unless you are allergic to the vaccine). You should receive the same higher dose of IG every 3 to 5 months while you are still at risk.

IG is prepared from blood products obtained from paid donors. In the United States, no cases of transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) through IG have been reported. The safety of IG prepared in countries other than the U.S. cannot be guaranteed.