May I take other medicines along with IVIg?

IVIg does not usually interfere with other medications. However, you must tell your doctor which medicines you are currently taking, including over-the-counter preparations and herbal remedies.

Can I have immunisations while on IVIg?

IVIg may alter the effect of a vaccine. Therefore it is best to avoid vaccines for at least 6 weeks after receiving IVIg.

Does IVIg affect pregnancy?

Experience of IVIg suggests that there are no harmful effects to the mother or baby if IVIg is given during pregnancy.
However, we would suggest that you avoid, IVIg during pregnancy.

The immunoglobulins from the IVIg will pass into breast milk. Therefore do not breastfeed if receiving IVIg.

May I drink alcohol while taking IVIg?

There is no reason to avoid alcohol before or after IVIg. However, only take alcohol in moderation.

Where can I obtain further information?

If you would like any further information about IVIg, or if you have any concerns about your treatment, you should discuss this with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Review Date: April 2028

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Acute Services Division

NHS
Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Information for patients about

Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIg) in Myasthenia Gravis

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What is intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg)?

Immunoglobulin treatment is often helpful for "autoimmune" diseases, like Myasthenia Gravis, where the body's immune system attacks the body.

Immunoglobulins are proteins produced naturally by the body's immune system to fight off infections. IVIg is a blood product which combines immunoglobulins from many human blood donors. It is not clear exactly how IVIg works, but we do know that it prevents the immune system from attacking the body's own tissues.
By dampening down the "autoimmune" process, we hope to stop the Myasthenia getting worse and improve your symptoms.

Why am I being prescribed IVIg?

We use IVIg in the treatment of Myasthenia Gravis when there is a need for a fast response, often while waiting for other medications for myasthenia to take effect. We can also use it as a "rescue" treatment in the event of an acute relapse of symptoms.

When and how do I take IVIg?

We give IVIg into a vein using an infusion pump. Therefore we will give you the treatment in hospital. The infusion will take several hours as the drug has to be given slowly. The rate of the infusion can be gradually increased, to a maintenance level, provided you have no problems. We will observe you closely and regularly check your blood pressure, pulse and temperature. After the infusion has finished we will observe you to check for any side-effects.

We calculate your dose according to your weight. Some people will need to attend every day for 5 days and others every day for 3 days. In rare circumstances some people require the treatment to be repeated on a regular basis.

How long will IVIg take to work?

Each person's response to IVIg varies. If IVIg is to have an effect on your Myasthenia, it may take up to 4 weeks for you to notice any improvement in your symptoms. Some people however do not respond to this treatment.
If this is the case you and your doctor will discuss this.

What are the possible risks or side-effects?

People receiving IVIg may occasionally experience (during or after the infusion) a chill, headache, abdominal pain, fever, nausea, vomiting and joint pain - particularly low back pain. If they occur during the infusion, we may stop or slow down the infusion. Occasionally people may experience an allergic reaction or their blood pressure drops (sometimes causing them to feel faint or light-headed). They may develop itchy skin, swelling of the face and throat, and have difficulty breathing. Very occasionally IVIg can cause a rise in blood pressure.

A nurse will monitor you during the infusion but please report any new symptoms during or after the infusion. These reactions occur only in a minority of patients.

Rarely, people receiving IVIg may experience a rash or abnormalities in liver function (detected by blood tests), but these usually settle quickly.
Other rare side-effects can also occur. These include acute kidney failure, inflammation of the brain (aseptic meningitis), and a type of anaemia called haemolytic anaemia which will recover with time. All these rare side-effects are treatable.

The administration of IVIg can very rarely be associated with conditions caused by increased clotting of the blood-heart attack, stroke, and blood clots in the lung (pulmonary embolism) or legs (deep venous thrombosis, or DVT).

All blood donors have been screened