IVIG infusion – Patient information

**Medication** – intravenous administration of human immunoglobulins (10%) [IVIG] is a sterile, highly purified solution of human antibodies in saline.

**Why is it used?**

Research has found that raised natural killer cell activity (toxic white blood cells) or high levels of cytokines (TH1:TH2) can act against an embryo and prevent its implantation into the endometrium.  This is known as implantation failure. In addition, some auto immune disorders can also have a detrimental impact upon the healthy implantation and early progress of an embryo which can also cause implantation failure and early miscarriage. Your consultant may recommend IVIG therapy in order to combat these factors.

**Who may benefit from IVIG therapy?**

IVIG infusions can help women who have high levels of natural killer cell activity, had previous implantation failure or early miscarriage/s. IVIG is offered as a second line therapy once other therapies for immune system modulation, including intralipids or corticosteroids, have been deemed ineffective. IVIG is not recommended for all patients. Please speak to your consultant regarding whether it might be beneficial for you. We also recommend that patients refer to the regulator’s web page regarding treatment “add-ons” for further information:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/explore-all-treatments/treatment-add-ons/>

**When is the best time to have the infusions?**

Your consultant will discuss the timing of the infusions with you and re-testing to see if your natural killer cell activity has gone down.

**How are the infusions carried out?**

As the IVIG is in liquid form it is administered by inserting a cannula (a fine plastic tube) into a vein in the arm or hand.  Each infusion takes between 2 to 4 hours during which the you will be seated comfortably and in private.  You may eat and drink normally whilst the infusion is taking place and a clinical team member will monitor you throughout the appointment.

**Are there any noticeable effects or other risks of the infusion?**

There are no serious adverse effects with the infusion although some patients may experience a tiredness, feeling cold and slight headache. However, allergic reaction is a possibility and you will be closely monitored for this during an infusion.

Before you can have the infusion you will screened thoroughly (normal blood count, liver function and IgA levels, negative to Hepatitis C) to ensure the IVIG infusion is not likely to cause an adverse reaction.

IVIG is prescribed to women undergoing IVF and those with a history of recurrent miscarriage.  However, there are no published randomised controlled trials assessing its efficacy. Furthermore, use of IVIG for immunological issues in fertility patients is off license. The potential risks and side effects of sepsis and hypercoagulation have been identified with IVIG therapy.  In addition, the carcinogenic and mutagenic potential of IVIG have not been assessed.  There have been no animal studies of the use of IVIG and it is not known whether IVIG can cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman or can affect her reproductive capacity.

**What is included in the cost?**

A fee is payable for the immunoglobulin product and the infusion service separately. Any other fertility investigations, treatment or preservation services for either partner are not included in this charge.