GUILLAIN BARRE SYNDROME
Foundation of Australia

IVIG: INTRAVENOUS IMMUNOGLOBULIN
INTRODUCTION

This leaflet has been written for patients and carers to provide some basic information about Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) and its use in the treatment of acute and chronic neuropathies.

Your medical team will be happy to discuss any questions you may have.

WHAT IS INTRAVENOUS IMMUNOGLOBULIN?

Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) is made from the 'plasma' of donated human blood. 'Plasma' is the clear fluid part of the blood. This blood is donated by many different people.

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT IVIG

IVIg is only licensed for use in the treatment of Guillain-Barré syndrome (or acute inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy (AIDP). Although it is not licensed for use in other neuropathies, there is convincing evidence that IVIg is a useful treatment in many different neuropathies including Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyradiculoneuropathy (CIDP) and Multifocal Motor Neuropathy with Conduction Block (MMNCB).

IVIg is now an accepted treatment for these conditions in most European countries and in the United States.

HOW IS IVIG GIVEN?

Currently IVIg is only given in hospital, usually in a day care unit. It is given through a drip and the rate, dose and time are calculated individually for each patient. If the treatment is successful it may have to be given on repeated occasions.
ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS OF IVIG?

As with all treatments, side effects can occur with IVIg, although usually these are minimal and do not require the treatment to be stopped.

Transient side effects, which often respond to changes in the rate of administration of the infusion, include headache and low blood pressure. More rarely, a rash can develop.

IVIg thickens the blood slightly so particular consideration of its use is given to patients with kidney failure, previous heart disease, strokes or blood clots. Very rarely such severe complications can result from IVIg use.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF IVIG?

IVIg is a blood product and therefore there is a theoretical risk of infections being transmitted from the donors of the blood. In practice, the blood from which IVIg is made is screened for all known infections such as hepatitis viruses and AIDS and these cannot survive the many purification steps. In addition IVIg is very highly purified to reduce the risk of infection with any other agent to a minimum.

New variant Creutzfeld Jacob disease (nvCJD or ‘mad cow disease’) is also a transmissible infectious disease. However, although there have been a very few cases transmitted by blood transfusion, there is no evidence that it can be transmitted by blood products such as IVIg, hence any risk is very tiny. However at present there is no test to see if nvCJD is present in blood and the risk of infection with nvCJD is thought to be very tiny.
WILL I HAVE TO GIVE MY CONSENT FOR TREATMENT?

Yes. Before this treatment is given to you, the doctor will explain the implications and ask you to sign a consent form to show that you understand what has been said and that you agree to have the treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment with IVIg please ask your doctor or nurse.