

Immunoglobulin Shortage

Who is this leaflet for?

You are being given this leaflet if you receive immunoglobulin therapy, either to support an immune system that is under-producing antibodies (primary or secondary antibody deficiency) or to help treat a condition resulting from an overactive immune system.

What is in this leaflet?

This leaflet explains:

- Why immunoglobulins are currently in short supply.
- What this shortage means for you.
- What you should do if you experience any problems after a change in your immunoglobulin treatment.

Why is there a shortage of immunoglobulin?

In the UK immunoglobulins are prepared from human blood donations, from the USA and mainland Europe. Following the global spread of the Covid-19 infection and lockdown restrictions, blood donations stopped for many months and then restarted at a much lower rate due to social distancing measures.

As well as this shortfall, there has been a sharp rise in demand for immunoglobulin therapy during the pandemic. Some conditions which may have been treated with powerful immune suppressive medicines before the pandemic have been treated with immunoglobulins instead, as doctors were reluctant to suppress patient's immune systems, in case this made people more susceptible to Covid-19.

This means that the UK does not have enough of its normal immunoglobulin preparations to meet current demand.

How long will this shortage last?

It takes around 8-10 months from blood being donated until it is ready to be used as a medicine because of the complex manufacturing processes required to produce immunoglobulin. Even as blood donation centres return to normal, the shortages of immunoglobulin will continue for a number of months. These shortages are international and the UK is not alone in experiencing a decline in supply. All manufacturers are affected and hospitals have little choice as to which types of immunoglobulin they are allowed to purchase. We expect the current limitation in supply to last into 2022.

What is East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust doing to manage this shortage?

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust has been working together with NHS England and the regional immunoglobulin panel to manage this shortage. At present, supply is reviewed and allocated to patients on a month to month basis.

The panel is working with doctors to make sure immunoglobulins are used appropriately, so that patients who need therapy can continue to be treated.

What does this mean for me?

It is likely that you may experience a change to your current therapy. These could include:

- A change in the brand of immunoglobulin used. All brands of immunoglobulin are equally effective.
- A switch to an alternative treatment where appropriate (replacing immunoglobulin).
- A temporary break in therapy (e.g. saving immunoglobulin for the winter months).
- A lower dose or a longer gap between doses.
- A different type of injection.

All decisions about your immunoglobulin treatment will be made in consultation with the team caring for you. Wherever possible, we will continue to provide you with your regular brand of immunoglobulin. However, where an alternative brand or treatment is used we will monitor your condition and immunoglobulin blood levels, where appropriate, closely.

Who can I contact for further information and advice?

The Nurses administering your immunoglobulin treatment will monitor you throughout the treatments and will assist to answer any questions you have during your infusion. If you feel unwell after a change to your medication, please report this to your doctor or Specialist Nurse or to the nurses at your next appointment.

Relevant contact details at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust:

Pevensey Day Unit,

0300 131 4500 Ext 7718865

Neurology Department,

0300 131 4500 Ext 735002/735003

Infusion Unit Service,

0300 131 4500 Ext 771430/773100

Haematology Department,

0300 131 4500 Ext 735497/735496

Respiratory Department,

0300 1314500 Ext 734816/734815

Rheumatology Department,

0300 131 4500 Ext 724847/734668

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information: Enter names and job titles (at least one from each site if appropriate)

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet: Medicines Optimisation Group

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