

If your immunoglobulin blood product changes

here are some answers to questions you might have



If your doctor has asked you to change the immunoglobulin blood product you receive, you may have a few questions. It's normal to feel a little anxious about any change, so we've put together some information, including commonly asked questions that you might want to know the answer to.

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Immunoglobulin Blood Products in New Zealand

Immunoglobulin blood products are manufactured from plasma donated by New Zealanders, which is sent to CSL Behring in Australia for processing, before being returned to New Zealand Blood Service (NZBS) for use. These products can also come from the plasma of dedicated blood donors in Europe or North America, which is processed by either CSL Behring or Grifols, to top-up our local supply.

NZBS is responsible for the safety and supply of immunoglobulin blood products to meet the needs of New Zealanders. How it is used is regularly monitored to ensure New Zealanders with a clinical need for immunoglobulin have access to it.

From time-to-time the immunoglobulin products produced or available in NZ change. All immunoglobulin blood products, whether from New Zealand plasma or imported plasma, must meet the same high standards of safety and effectiveness.



Your questions answered



Why am I being asked to switch my immunoglobulin blood product to a different one?

There are many reasons why products change, and it depends on the situation. For example:

- You can't tolerate the immunoglobulin blood product your doctor originally prescribed. Perhaps because a skin rash developed or you experienced headaches that were difficult to manage.
- How the immunoglobulin blood product is administered might change. For example, initially it was given intravenously via a drip (directly into your vein), but after discussion with your doctor or health care professional, it is agreed subcutaneously (a needle under the skin) might be better for you and your lifestyle.
- How the immunoglobulin blood product is processed might change. When this happens the original product is 'retired' by the manufacturer and a new product (with a new name) is registered.
- New immunoglobulin blood products become available that can be introduced to top-up our local supply.
- The immunoglobulin blood product your local Blood Bank has available to them might change. If you move between regions in New Zealand this may arise.

Any time a product or its name changes, your doctor will need to obtain your informed consent and will explain how the new product works.



Are all immunoglobulin blood products the same?

All immunoglobulin blood products available in New Zealand contain immunoglobulin G (IgG). These are antibodies found in plasma that fight infections and diseases, as well as playing an important role in regulating the immune system.

What is different is the concentration (percentage) of IgG in each product, in other words how 'strong' the solution might be. More concentrated products can be useful when higher doses are prescribed, as the total volume needed is less. Immunoglobulin products can also differ in their other ingredients, things such as sodium, sugars and amino acids, as well as having different manufacturing processes.

These differences don't alter the safety or effectiveness but determine how the product is administered (e.g. how quickly the speed of the infusion can be increased) or how you respond to the product might differ.

Your doctor will choose a product that is right for you, based upon your health needs and what is available in New Zealand.





What side effects might I experience when my immunoglobulin blood product is changed?

Possible side effects are the same as those that can arise when you first started treatment with an immunoglobulin blood product. Symptoms such as headache, tiredness or body aches may occur. These are more likely to happen with the first few treatments and usually get better over time. These side effects are much less common with regular subcutaneous immunoglobulin (SCIg). Ensuring you are well-hydrated before your infusion remains important to lessen or avoid side effects.

Rarely, more serious side effects, such as allergic reactions or blood clots, can occur with either intravenous or subcutaneous immunoglobulin. What we know is that side effects from product switching are quite uncommon. What is always important is to tell your doctor or health care professional if you experience a side effect or have any concerns as you adjust.



Is changing the immunoglobulin blood product I receive compulsory? What choices do I have?

This depends on why you had to change the immunoglobulin blood product you receive.

If you had side effects to one product and the new product doesn't change how you feel, your doctor will consider what is the best option to ensure you receive the best clinical benefit. This might mean another change or perhaps a reduced dose or slower speed of infusion.

If you had to change your immunoglobulin product because your original product is no longer available or has been 'retired' by the manufacturer, the switch is unavoidable. Your doctor will discuss all the options available to you to minimise the impact on your treatment.



Are there other things I could do to make the change go smoothly?

There are several things you can do that may make the change easier for you, including:

- Tell your doctor or health care professional if you have any changes in your health (including medicines) since your last treatment.
- Consider using a treatment diary. This is a useful place to keep a record of any reactions, good or bad, that you have when switching products. Noting any changes to pain, fatigue, or activity, and how long the symptoms lasted can help your doctor to determine the best options available for you.
- Know what possible side effects might occur and what to do. Your doctor and healthcare professionals, as well as the information leaflets prepared by NZBS, can provide guidance and answer many of your questions. Ensure you have a phone number of who to contact first to seek advice, so the team can provide clinical support.





How will the change happen?

Your doctor or health care professional will discuss the proposed change with you, providing time to go through any questions you might have.

To be certain that you can tolerate the new product, and to ensure any possible side effects that might arise can be managed, you may be asked to attend a hospital or day stay unit for your first treatment, even if this is not what you do normally.

Before your appointment chat with your doctor or health care professional about how the new product might change your treatment. For example, the new product might increase or decrease the amount of time you need to spend at the hospital.

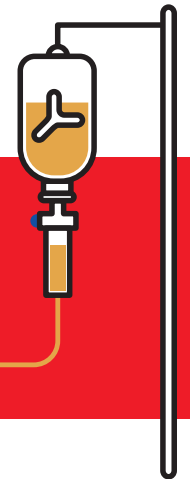
Here are a few questions that might be useful to ask, including:

- ◆ **How long will the first infusion and subsequent infusions take?**
- ◆ **How quickly can the infusion speed be increased during the first infusion, and subsequent infusions?**
- ◆ **What monitoring might be needed?**
- ◆ **Are the potential side effects different?**
- ◆ **Will the frequency of treatment differ?**
- ◆ **What options are available to me if the change is not successful?**

It is also a good time to mention any immunoglobulin blood product side effects that you have had before. Many side effects from intravenous immunoglobulin products for instance, can be prevented or minimised.

Always tell your healthcare professional straight away if you start to feel different, uncomfortable or unwell – this means they can swiftly respond and manage any side effect.

If you normally self-administer immunoglobulin blood products at home and are unable to attend a hospital, talk with your healthcare professional on how they can help you manage the change.



Want to know more?

You can find out more about immunoglobulin here:
nzblood.co.nz/patients/

Information provided by New Zealand Blood Service, Private Bag 92071, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142. 71 Great South Road, Epsom, Auckland. Telephone: 09 523 5733.

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