

Abbie » Unfortunately, headaches are a common side effect of intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) therapy. I spoke with one of our medical experts who recommends slowing the rate of your infusion even more. According to her, your infusion rate is still high for someone who suffers headaches. She advises a top rate of 100 ccs per hour. You could also consider infusing over two days (four hours each day). If the headaches continue, you should discuss changing IVIG brands with your treating physician since not all brands cause the same side effects.

Question »

What Can Be Done Other Than Premedications to Reduce Headaches After IVIG Infusions?

I am treated with 70 grams of Gammagard every other week. My premedications include 50 mg of intravenous Solu-Cortef, 30 mg of intravenous Toradol, 1,000 mg of Tylenol, 25 mg of Benadryl, 4 mg of Zofran and 10 mg of Zyrtec. My infusion takes six hours, and the maximum rate is set at 150. At home after the infusions, I take 1,000 mg of Tylenol, 50 mg of Benadryl, 10 mg of Toradol and 4 mg of Zofran every six hours. I also drink as much water as I can. Yet, I still get bad headaches that require me to stay in bed with ice. What do you recommend to reduce the headaches down to a five or below on the pain scale?

Question» Can IVIG Cause Hair Loss and Increase the TSH Level?

I am 68 years old and have bronchiectasis and cough blood. I also developed nontuberculous mycobacterial lung disease. My pulmonologist suggested intravenous immune globulin (IVIG), which I have been treated with for almost two years. Are my back aches, body pains, headaches, etc., related to IVIG and not just old age? Also, I have lost a lot of hair. Is that also due to the IVIG? I have been taking Synthroid for years, but in the last few months, I started experiencing thyroid-type symptoms (both physical and mental). The first tests showed my thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) level was low. And, I was just retested, and the TSH level is even lower. I recently changed locations where I am treated with IVIG, and the infusions are shorter. They used to take five hours, and now they only take three hours. Could the IVIG be affecting my TSH level?

Abbie» According to one of our experts, a chronic lung infection increases side effects with IVIG infusions, particularly fevers, chills, back aches, body aches, loose stools and headaches, which may be worsened by more rapid infusions. Our expert says three hours is too short. Instead, he recommends an infusion time of between five and six hours.

IVIG infusions are not generally related to hair loss. Rather, some patients see improvement in hair growth with IVIG treatment. On the other hand, thyroid dysfunction is definitely a cause of hair loss. In addition, IVIG should not worsen thyroid dysfunction, but rather improve autoimmune thyroid disease. Check with your physician about increasing the dose of Synthroid.

» **Have a question?** Email us at editor@IGLiving.com. Your information will remain confidential unless permission is given.

» **ABBIE CORNETT** is the patient advocate for *IG Living* magazine.