

Immunoglobulin treatment in Australia

Immunoglobulin treatment provides critical therapy for people with immune deficiencies and some autoimmune disorders and can be life-saving treatment.

Australia manages its Supply by collecting and Manufacturing immunoglobulin domestically and by importing it. IG products are made from pooled plasma collected from thousands of blood donors and is a precious resource to manufacture and cannot be manufactured synthetically. This makes it both expensive to produce and limit supply. And with demand growing both in Australia and worldwide for this precious resource it is essential that we manage access to Ig products carefully.

In this film we'll give you an overview of the governance arrangements, specifically the national policy, eligibility and how to make a request. The national policy sets out the overarching rules and regulations about how government-funded immunoglobulin product is accessed and used in Australia. It describes the role, responsibilities, Authority and accountabilities of every medical profession involved in immunoglobulin prescription and management. This is all managed by the National Blood Authority as part of its immunoglobulin governance program. The overarching aim of the national policy and associated governance arrangements is to ensure immunoglobulin product is available to those who need and will benefit from it most. This means ensuring that immunoglobulin product is used for patients with conditions where immunoglobulin use is supported by scientific and clinical evidence and where other treatments are less effective or cannot be used.

The criteria for the clinical use of immunoglobulin in Australia or the criteria for short, are a key component of the national policy and immunoglobulin governance arrangements. The criteria provide detailed information about which medical conditions qualify for immunoglobulin under the national blood arrangements and any circumstances or considerations that may apply. Clinicians play a vital role in considering each patient's clinical presentation against the criteria. The criteria also detail when and how a patient's immunoglobulin treatment must be reviewed by their doctor for continued access. The criteria are defined agreed and updated by health experts from across Australia. This includes working groups of highly experienced Medical Specialists. From each of the major medical disciplines which use immunoglobulin in therapy, as well as a higher level advisory committee with input from both National and state and territory governments. Having clearly defined eligibility criteria helps ensure that immunoglobulin is available to patients fairly and equitably on a nationally consistent basis. It also helps ensure supply to meet demand.

Immunoglobulin is made available without charge to any patient who needs it under the national blood arrangements and it's funded by all Australian governments.

Prescribers must make requests for immunoglobulin through the National Online System BloodSTAR, which is accessed through the national blood Authority's website. BloodSTAR asks a series of questions about the patient and their medical condition, which the prescriber must answer. Once completed patient eligibility is assessed in line with the criteria and the national policy and manually reviewed by an authoriser from Red Cross lifeblood. The request for immunoglobulin is then approved or declined in line with the criteria. Once approved product can be ordered through blood net NBA's online blood ordering and inventory management system. The process for assessing immunoglobulin is rigorous but it is entirely necessary. Immunoglobulin is a precious and valuable resource and it's essential that we make it available to the people who need it at most.