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Drug Therapy

Version of 2016

3. Intravenous immunoglobulins

3.1 Description

Immunoglobulin is a synonym for antibody. Intravenous immunoglobulins (IVIG) are prepared from large pools of plasma from healthy blood donors. Plasma is the liquid component of human blood. IVIGs are used to treat children who lack antibodies as a result of a defect in their immune system. However, their mechanisms of actions are still unclear and may vary in different situations. IVIGs have also been shown to be helpful in some autoimmune and rheumatic diseases.

3.2 Dosage/modes of administration

They are given by intravenous infusion, with different schedules depending on the disease.

3.3 Side effects

Side effects are rare and include anaphylactoid (allergic) reactions, muscle pain, fever and headache during infusion, headache and vomiting due to non-infective meningeal irritation (which physicians call aseptic, meaning that there is inflammation of the membranes around the brain) about 24 hrs after the infusion.
These side effects resolve spontaneously. Some patients, particularly those with Kawasaki disease and hypoalbuminaemia, may develop abnormalities of their blood pressure when receiving IVIG; these patients need careful monitoring by an experienced team.
IVIGs are free of HIV, hepatitis and most of other known viruses.

3.4 Main paediatric rheumatic diseases indication

Kawasaki disease.
Juvenile dermatomyositis.