

Frequently Asked Questions: Subcutaneous Immunoglobulin

For Patients/Carers

What is subcutaneous immunoglobulin (SCIg)?

Immunoglobulin is a product derived from blood plasma donations which have been divided into different components. The immunoglobulin components are antibodies from the body's immune (defence) system which fight infections and disease. Subcutaneous immunoglobulin (SCIg) allows patients to receive immunoglobulin subcutaneously, which means through a needle into the body's tissues just under the skin. The advantage of SCIg, in contrast to intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg), is that some patients will be able to self-administer the product outside of the hospital setting.

How do I get access to SCIg?

To receive funded SCIg under the National Blood Supply arrangements your medical diagnosis must match one of four criteria. The Criteria are available at www.blood.gov.au/SCIG. You must also be treated by a clinical specialist within a hospital-based SCIg program. You and your doctor will make a decision about your suitability for this treatment. Contact your doctor to discuss the possibility of this treatment.

How do I apply for the product? Who will manage the application process?

Your doctor will request the medication and manage the process on your behalf. If you need more product as a result of accidental breakage or spillage, you will need to contact your hospital and let them know why you need more.

How do I use SCIg?

SCIg is infused into the body's tissues using a needle. You will be provided with training if you are considered by your doctor, to be suitable for this treatment through a hospital-based SCIg program.

Do I need to go to hospital for this treatment?

SCIg is only offered through eligible hospital-based programs. Some hospitals may have facilities in place to allow suitable patients to treat themselves at home. If your hospital offers this option, and you are considered suitable, you will be provided with training so that you can treat yourself at home at times convenient to you. You will still need to be reviewed at intervals by your doctor to check how well the treatment is working for you. Your doctor will let you know when and how often they need to see you.

Will my SCIg treatment change?

There may be occasions where your doctor will discontinue your treatment, either temporarily to check the effectiveness of the treatment, or permanently if the treatment is no longer deemed necessary. If you are having difficulty with treating yourself, then you may be treated in hospital with intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg).

Will the SCIg product I am using be changed?

There may be an occasion where, due to shortage of product or a product recall, you may be given a SCIg product from a different supplier. Your doctor will provide you with all the necessary details if this happens.

Who will train me to use SCIg?

SCIg training will be organised by your doctor.

How much SCIg can I collect?

SCIg will be supplied monthly initially and you will be able to access repeat prescriptions without seeing your doctor, however your response to the treatment will be evaluated at times by your doctor.

Where will I collect the medication?

The product will be available for collection at a suitable agreed hospital pharmacy or medical centre.

Can I only collect the medication from the hospital where I am seen by my doctor?

The treating facility (where you are seen by your doctor) is the responsible SCIg program hospital; however you can pick up your products from any hospital. The treating hospital must provide all consumables.

How do I keep track of my treatments?

A patient diary will be supplied with the initial supply of medication from the supplier. This diary will be a record for you of what, when and how the medication is used, as well as any reactions to the treatment. Any product not used, and the reason for this, will need to be recorded as well. This will be a useful record to take with you to your doctor and to record any questions or concerns you may have regarding your treatment.

What if I cannot use the SCIg (e.g. breakage/not suitable)? How do I get replacement product?

If for some reason your product cannot be used you must record the reason in your diary. You can order replacement product by contacting your hospital.

If I am using this product at home will I need to go where my doctor is situated to collect the medication?

You will be able to make arrangements to collect your medication from a site local to you.

How do I store my SCIg product?

There are specific instructions included with each product about how it should be stored. Please refer to the Product Information sheet included with the medication. Please also see the patient information at <https://www.blood.gov.au/system/files/documents/scig-trifold-patient-information-brochure20160307.pdf>

What happens if my SCIg product is left out of the fridge or my fridge breaks down?

If your SCIg product is required to be stored at 2°C – 8°C and has reached room temperature, the product should not be returned to the fridge and must continue to be stored below 25°C for up to two weeks. There are differences in the way each product responds to removal from refrigeration and you should refer to the Product Information sheet included with the medication.

How do I keep track of when the SCIg product will expire if it has been removed from the fridge?

If your SCIg product is required to be stored at 2°C – 8°C, you will need to write the date on the product carton when it is removed from the fridge. The carton will have a space for you to record the date.

For Health Professionals

Which patients can access SCIg under the National Blood Supply arrangements?

To access SCIg, patients must meet eligibility criteria. These Criteria are available at www.blood.gov.au/SCIg.

How do I gain access to SCIg for my patients?

In the first phase of implementation, the Jurisdictional Blood Committee has endorsed the supply of SCIg through hospital-based programs only. Hospitals (except NSW) willing to participate in a SCIg program will need to submit the Hospital Acknowledgement Form – National SCIg Program available at www.blood.gov.au/SCIg to the Blood Service. In South Australia and Western Australia the form will be sent to the State Health Department for approval. There are different arrangements for participating hospitals within NSW and these are being managed by Local Health District and Specialty Health Network Chief Executives, and they are not required to submit the form. A current list of hospitals with this confirmation in place is available at www.blood.gov.au/SCIg.

How do I order SCIg?

SCIg may be ordered by a participating hospital through BloodSTAR or BloodNet. The completed appropriate patient specific SCIg request form available at http://www.transfusion.com.au/resource_centre/forms is forwarded to the Blood Service for approval. Once approval has been granted an order can be placed through your hospitals own system for ordering product. A flowchart of the processes involved in ordering can be viewed at www.blood.gov.au/SCIg.

Is this treatment limited to public institutions?

No, public and private hospitals running a hospital based SCIg program are able to order SCIg for their patients. However a clinician needs to be providing this form of treatment through a hospital based program where the hospital has confirmed its ability to manage the supply of SCIg, during this initial phase of the implementation.

Why does my order for SCIg need to be patient specific?

It is essential that peak clinical bodies and governments responsible for the supply of immunoglobulin products are aware of patient needs. Without full visibility of the demand for these products it is not possible to plan accurately and guarantee supply of products to meet clinical demand.

What products are available? What vial sizes are available?

The current list of products available, including vial size and supplier name, is available at <http://www.blood.gov.au/national-product-list>.

What about patients with conditions not covered by the Criteria?

No funded product will be available outside of the Criteria.