Reader: I infuse immune globulin (IG) subcutaneously with Hizentra weekly. How much flexibility do I have between doses? How close is too close together?

Amy: There’s not a hard rule regarding dosing. In fact, Hizentra was recently approved for biweekly (every two weeks) dosing. One of the benefits of subcutaneous IG therapy over intravenous IG therapy is flexibility in dosing, as well as more consistent IgG trough levels due to smaller doses of IG administered more frequently. Therefore, the most important thing is to infuse the drug, regardless of the timing.

If different sites are being used, the weekly doses could be infused on consecutive days if needed. If the same sites are going to be used, I would not recommend infusing until the previous dose has been absorbed.

Reader: How long can an open bottle of immune globulin (IG) be used? I infuse at home and want to use a very slow rate due to migraines, but it’s time-consuming. Can I draw half the dose into my pump to infuse on Wednesday and then infuse the other half on Thursday?

Amy: All IG products are preservative-free, so they should be used immediately. If the dose is prepared in a pharmacy in an IV room, there is more flexibility for longer-term storage. But, in the home, immediate use is recommended. If this is an intravenous IG infusion, you should speak with your pharmacist about sending smaller vial sizes to split the dose over two days. For example, if the dose is Privigen 40 grams once a month, instead of sending a 40-gram vial, the pharmacist could send two 20-gram vials or even four 10-gram vials. I would also suggest you let the pharmacist and physician know about the migraines to see if another adjustment in therapy can be made (addition/change of pre- or post-infusion medications, hydration or possibly a change of brand), in addition to infusing the dose over two days.

Reader: I experience severe skin reactions to the tape used to hold the needles in place during subcutaneous immune globulin (SCIG) infusions. What can you suggest?

Amy: There are several options to secure SCIG needles. If you are using paper tape (Mircropore), you could use plastic tape (Transpore) or silk tape (Durapore) instead. Occlusive dressings such as Tegaderm, Opsite or Primapore may also be used.

Reader: I have common variable immune deficiency. My doctor ordered 500 mLs of normal saline prior to and after my infusions of 40 grams of Privigen. Is normal saline compatible with Privigen?

Leslie: Intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) products have limited compatibility with normal saline. If IVIG requires dilution to a lower concentration, the manufacturer of Privigen suggests dextrose 5% in water solution as a compatible solution. For flushing of IV lines, it is acceptable to use normal saline to flush before or after IVIG. For adding fluid as extra hydration, there are a couple of things to consider. First, it is not recommended to run normal saline and IVIG at the same time through the same IV line, unless there is a physical separation. For example, some people have an IV access line that has more than one line — called a double or triple lumen catheter. In this situation, the IVIG and hydration solution are being infused into two separate lines within what looks like a single line. Second, when adding normal saline as a hydration solution, infuse it before or after the IVIG, as your physician has ordered. Or, consider using dextrose 5% in water as the hydration solution. The option your physician selected, to infuse normal saline before and after your IVIG, is fine.

Amy Ehlers, BS, PharmD, BCPS, is the director of pharmacy at NuFACTOR Specialty Pharmacy.

Leslie J. Vaughan, RPh, is senior vice president of clinical services at NuFACTOR Specialty Pharmacy.