

## What are Immunoglobulins and what do they do?

Immunoglobulin is the medical terminology for antibodies. Antibodies are part of the immune system that fights infection.

A shorthand way of describing Immunoglobulin is to call it **Ig**.

The immune system in a healthy person produces five main classes or kinds of Immunoglobulin. These are called **IgA**, **IgD**, **IgE**, **IgG** and **IgM**.

Different classes of immunoglobulin do different things.

**IgA** is found in the lungs, the gastrointestinal tracts, (stomach and intestines) and the genito-urinary tract. It is present in saliva, tears, sweat and nasal fluids. It is important in controlling infections in these parts of the body. It can also act as an “anti-inflammatory” immunoglobulin and is important in preventing the body making an immune response to foods or friendly bacteria.

**IgD** is important in the development of the B cell which produces antibodies. It is not found in the blood or tissues.

**IgE** deals mainly in allergic responses. It is responsible for protection against parasites, worms etc. (in addition to causing allergies).

**IgG** is found in the blood and gets to nearly all parts of the body to attack and kill most bacteria. **IgG** is the only antibody that can cross the placenta and provide immunity to the unborn child.

**IgM** is a “rapid action” antibody that is produced when the body is attacked by a bacteria or other bug that the immune system has never met before. It can be produced more quickly than other types of immunoglobulin.

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