

Primary Immunodeficiency Diseases

Primary immunodeficiency diseases occur in persons born with an immune system that is either absent or hampered in its ability to function. While not contagious, these diseases are caused by hereditary or genetic defects and can affect anyone, regardless of age or sex. The World Health Organization recognizes more than 200 primary immunodeficiency diseases - some are relatively common, others are quite rare. Some affect a single cell within the immune system; others may affect one or more components of the system.

And while the diseases may differ, they all share one common feature: each results from a defect in one of the functions of the body's normal immune system. Because one of the most important functions of the normal immune system is to protect us against infection, patients with primary immunodeficiency diseases commonly have an increased susceptibility to infection.

The infections may be in the skin, the sinuses, the throat, the ears, the lungs, the brain or spinal cord, or in the urinary or intestinal tracts, and the increased vulnerability to infection may include repeated infections, infections that won't clear up or unusually severe infections. People with primary immunodeficiency diseases live their entire lives more susceptible to infections--enduring recurrent health problems and often developing serious and debilitating illnesses. Fortunately, with proper medical care, many patients live full and independent lives.

Immunoglobulin is indicated for the treatment of patients with numerous primary immunodeficiency diseases. Typically, patients visit their healthcare provider once or twice a month for their treatments. Immunoglobulins are manufactured from donated human plasma. There are roughly 150 Minnesotans diagnosed with these rare diseases that rely on plasma protein therapies that for their treatment.

SOURCE: Immune Deficiency Foundation