

A randomised placebo-controlled Phase III multicentre trial: low-dose intravenous immunoglobulin treatment for long-standing complex regional pain syndrome (LIPS trial)

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Plain English summary

The LIPS trial

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Plain English summary

Complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS) is a condition that causes persistent severe pain, usually at the site of a previous injury, although pain can affect other parts of the body. CRPS can cause skin around the affected area to become oversensitive to touch.

Although CRPS symptoms can improve or completely resolve, for some people CRPS causes long-term pain. For many of those with moderate to severe CRPS, current pain treatments do not adequately reduce pain.

Exploratory research on a small number of people with moderate to severe CRPS showed that being given intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) can reduce pain. IVIg is from blood plasma and contains antibodies that protect against diseases. When people donate blood, the plasma can be separated out. IVIg is given to patients through a vein in their arm.

We conducted a second, much larger, study to see whether or not giving IVIg reduced the pain from CRPS. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups and received two infusions of either IVIg or of placebo (saline solution) 3 weeks apart. Following this, all participants also had the chance to receive two further infusions, at which time they definitely received IVIg. During both parts of the study, participants completed diaries that recorded how much pain they were in on a scale of 1–10.

For the 103 participants in the study, there was no significant difference found in pain reduction between the IVIg and placebo groups. Low-dose IVIg is not an effective treatment for moderate to severe CRPS.

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