

Iron Infusions: Patient Information

What is an IV iron infusion?

This is a procedure where a solution containing iron is administered to you via a cannula (tube) into your vein.

Why do I need iron?

Iron is essential for the body to make haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is an iron-containing molecular that gives blood its red colour. The iron in haemoglobin carries the oxygen molecules around in your blood stream, to deliver oxygen to tissues where it is needed.

If your body develops low levels of iron, this is seen in your blood tests, often as a low ferritin level. Once the iron levels fall too low, the haemoglobin level falls below normal. This is known as 'iron deficiency anaemia'.

What does iron deficiency feel like?

Low iron, causing low haemoglobin and less oxygen carrying capacity in your blood will show up as symptoms such as:

- Tiredness
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath on exertion

Why might I need IV iron?

Doctors usually treat iron deficiency anaemia with tablet or liquid iron by mouth. This approach works well for most people and is usually tried first.

Intravenous iron might be needed if you are:

- Unable to tolerate iron taken by mouth (due to allergy, or gastric upset, diarrhoea or constipation)
- Unable to absorb iron through the gut
- Unable to absorb enough iron due to the amount of blood that the body is losing
- In need of a rapid increase in iron levels to avoid complications or a blood transfusion

What are the Risks and benefits of IV iron?

There is a small chance of having an allergic reaction to IV iron which, in rare cases, can be life threatening.

Tell your doctor if you have any medication allergies.

Also tell your doctor if you:

- Are pregnant or trying to get pregnant
- Have a history of asthma, eczema or other allergies
- Have had a reaction to any type of iron injection or infusion in the past
- Have a history of high iron levels, haemochromatosis or liver problems
- Are on any medications (including over the counter or herbal supplements)

What are the Side effects of IV iron?

Patients receiving iron infusions can experience side effects including:

- metallic taste in the mouth
- headache
- nausea or vomiting
- muscle and joint pain
- shortness of breath
- itchiness, rash
- changes to blood pressure or pulse
- irritation or swelling at injection site

Severe side effects are rare; you will be closely monitored for any signs of these side effects by nursing staff.

What do I do on the day of the iron infusion?

You do not need to fast. Have your breakfast/lunch.

Take all of your regular medications.

You can drive home after the infusion (unless there is an unexpected reaction) and resume usual activities.

Should I keep taking my Iron tablets?

Not usually. These should be stopped for a week after an iron infusion because the iron in them will not be absorbed by the body. If you are having more than one iron infusion then stop the iron tablets during the course of treatment as well. Your doctor will often do another blood test about 6



Dr Kirsten Herbert
MBBS (Hons) BSc(Med) FRACP PhD

Assoc Prof Melita Kenealy
MBBS (Hons) FRACP FRCPA

Dr Michael Dickinson
MBBS (Hons) DMed Sci FRACP FRCPA

Assoc Prof Max Wolf
MBBS FRACP FRCPA

Cabrini Haematology & Oncology Centre --- **(03) 9500 9345**

Cabrini Haematology & Oncology Centre - **(03) 9500 9345**

weeks after your iron infusion to tell you if and when you should start taking tablet iron again.

If you are worried or side effects are interfering with your daily activities contact your doctor for advice. If you have chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness or neck/mouth swelling SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION / CALL AN AMBULANCE (000).