

# Intravenous (IV) Iron Infusions

## Information for patients, families, and carers

An increasingly popular method of treating general practice patients with iron deficiency involves intravenous iron infusions with Ferinject® or another similar preparation. This information sheet answers some common questions about IV iron infusions. Further details may be given by your doctor and be specific to your circumstances.

### Why is iron important?

Iron is needed by our bodies. It is used to make Haemoglobin. This is the part of the red blood cell that carries oxygen around the body. Iron is also used in muscles for movement and in our brain. Of you have low iron levels, you may feel tired or fatigued and this can impact on your ability to perform daily activities. Sometimes the iron levels are so low that the body can't make enough red blood cells, this is known as iron deficiency anaemia.

### Why might I need IV iron?

If your iron levels are low, your doctor may recommend an iron supplement to increase your body's stores of iron. Often this is done by taking a tablet or liquid. Sometimes iron is given straight into the body through a vein as a slow 'drip'. This is called an intravenous (IV) infusion. This infusion is made of iron, not blood. Sometimes more than 1 infusion is needed to fully top up iron stores.

Some of the reasons your doctor has recommended an iron infusion might be because you don't tolerate the side effects of oral iron replacement, you may not be absorbing the tablets due to another condition, you may benefit from a quick iron replacement such as before major surgery, prior to having a baby or if you have significant symptoms from iron deficiency impacting on your quality of life. Talk to your doctor about which of these reasons apply to you.

### Types of IV iron

The choice of IV iron preparation often depends on the age of the patient, level of deficiency and other medical

conditions. Speak to your doctor about the available options offered.

- Ferric Carboxymaltose (Ferinject®) – not for under 14 years.
- Ferric Derisomaltose (Monofer®) – not for under 14 years and not when rapid iron delivery is necessary.
- Iron Polymaltose (Ferrosig®) – there is no age restriction.
- Iron Sucrose (Venofer®) – Use when undergoing long-term haemodialysis and /or if receiving supplemental erythropoietin therapy. Not to use in children.

### Iron Infusion in children

Sometimes children require IV iron replacement for the same reasons that adults may. Use in children is off-label but it is routinely given to children at Royal Children's Hospital. Ask your doctor for more information.

### Iron Infusion in pregnancy

During pregnancy, your iron levels need to be high enough to ensure that your baby also gets the oxygen they need to grow properly. Some women have low levels of iron during their pregnancy which leads to iron deficiency anaemia (IDA). IDA in pregnancy can be treated with oral iron supplements or an iron infusion.

You should try oral iron supplements and avoid iron infusion in the first trimester of pregnancy where possible. Iron infusions are considered safe to use in the second and third trimester of pregnancy. Speak with your doctor about which one is best for you.

### What are the side effects with IV iron?

Generally, when side effects do occur, they are mild and go away on their own.

Common risks and complications:	Uncommon risks and complications:	Rare risks and complications:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• low blood pressure</li><li>• palpitations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dizziness and feeling faint</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• anaphylaxis – breathing difficulties, which may be life threatening. You will</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facial flushing</li> <li>• dizziness</li> <li>• vomiting and nausea</li> <li>• headache</li> <li>• mild pain or redness around the injection site</li> <li>• joint and/or muscle pain</li> <li>• changes in taste (e.g. metallic)</li> <li>• hypophosphataemia (Ferinject® only) (low blood phosphate level) which is most often temporary and has no symptoms. This can cause muscle weakness, respiratory failure, heart failure and in rare circumstances osteomalacia, fractures, seizures and/or coma. You may require oral medication to raise your blood phosphate level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chest pain/ back pain</li> <li>• chills and fever</li> <li>• skin irritation and rash</li> <li>• swelling of the face, mouth and limbs</li> <li>• (swollen lymph nodes)</li> <li>• difficult breathing</li> </ul>	<p>be closely monitored whilst the iron infusion is given and for at least 30 minutes after and treatment will be given if needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rapid heart beat and low BP</li> <li>• skin staining (brown discoloration) may occur due to leakage of iron into the tissue around the cannula (drip) site. This is not common, but the stain can be long lasting or permanent</li> <li>• death as a result of this procedure is possible. You will be closely monitored whilst the iron infusion is given and for at least 30 minutes following completion.</li> </ul>
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**What to ask your doctor**

You may wish to talk with your doctor about the following:

- Why do I need IV iron?
- What other options are there?

- About how long will the iron infusion take?
- How many iron infusions will I need?
- When do I stop taking iron tablets?
- How long will it take for the iron to work?
- Any questions about any side effects?

**What happens on the day?**

- It is helpful to be well hydrated prior to the iron infusion.
- Have your usual breakfast or lunch.
- Take all your regular medications.
- Unless you have an unexpected reaction, you can drive home and do your normal activities.
- It is desirable not to participate in strenuous activity for 24 hours after the infusion.
- Very little iron crosses into breast milk so breast feeding mothers may safely breastfeed.
- Before leaving the clinic, ensure that you have:
  - the number to contact if you have any worries or questions
  - the dates for any follow up tests or appointments

If you have signed a consent form, you have the right to **change your mind at any time** prior to the treatment.

**What happens during the treatment?**

- The IV cannula is inserted by your doctor.
- The infusion may take 15-30 minutes, or longer if another preparation of IV iron is used
- You will have clinical observations before and after the iron infusion, usually 30 minutes after the procedure.
- Inform the nurse straight away of any pain, discomfort, burning, prickling, redness, staining or swelling at the cannula (drip) site.

<b>PATIENT</b>		<b>DOCTOR</b>	
Name	DOB	Full Name	
Signature	Date	Signature	Date