

# Iron Intravenous Infusion

## Information for consumers

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This information sheet answers some common questions about intravenous (IV) iron infusions. **You should also talk to your doctor and other healthcare providers about your care.**

### What is an intravenous (IV) iron infusion?

A plastic tube is put into one of your veins (usually in the forearm) and is attached to a drip that infuses iron into your blood stream.



Forearm with plastic tube in vein.

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### Why is iron important?

Our bodies need iron. If you are low in iron your body is unable to make enough red blood cells and you become anaemic. You may feel tired and unable to carry out your normal daily activities. Common symptoms include: fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches.

### Do I need IV iron?

The most common way to treat iron deficiency is to take oral tablets or liquid. This works well for most people and is usually tried first. However, you may require IV iron if you:

- are unable to take oral iron (tablets/liquid)
- are not absorbing or responding to oral iron
- have chronic kidney disease, chronic heart failure or cancer
- need to increase your iron levels quickly (for example, if you have symptoms of iron deficiency, before or after major surgery, late in pregnancy or after giving birth or to avoid blood transfusion)

### What to tell your Doctor?

Before you have an iron infusion, you must tell your doctor and the nurse/midwife administering your iron infusion if you:

- are pregnant / trying to get pregnant, as IV iron should be avoided in the first trimester
- have a history of 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)
- have any signs or symptoms of an infection such as feeling unwell or having a fever

### Common side effects – generally mild and temporary

Headache, nausea, changes to blood pressure, dizziness, itchiness, flushing, fever or chills.



## Uncommon side effects

### Permanent Skin Staining:

- Around 1 in 100 patients experience permanent skin staining (brown discolouration) after IV iron. Please inform your nurse if you experience any pain/discomfort during infusion.

### Serious Allergic Reactions:

- Although very uncommon, some people may have a serious allergic reaction. In rare cases this can be life threatening. You will be closely monitored while IV iron is given.

### Delayed Side Effects:

- Sometimes side effects (for example, headache, muscle or joint pain) can start one to two days after the infusion. Mostly they will settle down by themselves over the next couple of days.
- Some forms of IV iron (ferric carboxymaltose or Ferinject®) can cause low blood phosphate. Symptoms include muscle pain or weakness, tiredness, and in severe cases seizures and bone fractures. If you are concerned, contact your doctor.

## How much iron will be needed?

Depending on the formulation used, you may need a second dose around a week later. In some cases, iron tablets (or liquid) are recommended after the infusion to slowly top up your iron levels. **If oral iron is recommended it should not start until at least one week after your last iron infusion** as the iron within the tablets (or liquid) will not be absorbed. It can take a few weeks for the full effect of the iron infusion to occur.

## How long will the iron infusion take?

Depending on the iron formulation you are provided, and the dose required, your iron infusion may take as little as 15 minutes or up to 5 hours.

## What do I need to do on the day of the iron infusion?

- It is helpful if you are well hydrated (have had enough to drink) before your IV iron infusion so that putting in a drip may be easier.
- Have your regular breakfast/lunch and take your regular medications.
- You can drive home after the infusion and resume usual activities (unless you experience an unexpected reaction and medical staff inform you otherwise).

Before leaving the unit/ward where the infusion was performed, ensure that you have:

- a contact phone number if you have any worries or questions.
- the dates for any follow up tests and/or appointments.

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## References

Adapted with permission from Alfred Health – Intravenous (IV) Iron Infusion Patient Information, 11/05/2022; and QLD Health Metro North Hospital & Health Service – Intravenous Iron Infusion Patient Information, version 2, 09/2019