

Intravenous (IV) iron infusions

Why iron given by a drip into a vein is sometimes needed...

This leaflet answers some common questions about IV iron infusions. It does not contain all available information and does not take the place of talking to your doctor about why IV iron has been recommended in your particular case.

What is an IV iron infusion?

“Intravenous” or “IV” means giving something directly into the blood stream of the body through a vein. The doctor or nurse will place a cannula (drip) into a vein (usually in the arm) this is attached to a tube that contains iron mixed with a sterile salt water solution which is slowly “dripped” (infused) into the vein.

Why is iron important?

Iron is essential for the body to make “haemoglobin”. When the amount of iron in the body gets too low, the “haemoglobin” level falls below normal. This is known as “**iron deficiency anaemia**”.

Haemoglobin is very important it carries oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. If your haemoglobin or iron levels are low this may make you feel tired and less able to carry out your normal routine.

Why might I need IV iron?

The common way to treat **iron deficiency anaemia** is to take iron as a tablet or liquid. This works well for most people and is usually tried first. If this is not right for you your doctor may recommend an iron infusion. Your doctor will explain the risks, and benefits of this infusion choice, as well as other available treatments. You will be asked to consent to this procedure.

Before you have an iron infusion you must tell your doctor if you:

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

Prior to the infusion

Cease oral iron supplements 1 week before the infusion

Day of the iron infusion

- Have your breakfast/lunch. You do not need to fast for an iron infusion.
- Take all of your regular medications
- You can drive to the clinic and home after the infusion and resume usual activities (unless there is an unexpected reaction)
- The doctor or nurse will put an IV drip in your arm

Patients receiving iron infusions can experience side effects. Please tell your nurse immediately if you experience any of these things:

- Temporary changes in taste (e.g. metallic)
- Sudden onset of diarrhoea
- Headache, feeling sick or vomiting
- Muscle and joint pain
- Shortness of breath
- Itchiness, rash

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- Dizziness and/or palpitations
- Burning and swelling at injection site. If the infusion enters the tissue there may be permanent scarring / discoloration at the site.

Severe side effects are rare. You will be closely monitored by the nurse during the infusion of iron.

When you go home you should stop taking your iron tablets and not restart them until you have checked with your doctor.

The iron will take a few weeks to have its full effect and your doctor will check your blood iron levels to see how you are responding.

Sometimes side effects can start 1 to 2 days after the infusion and include headache, mild fever, joint and muscle aches. Some may last for up to 10 days, but most settle down by themselves.

If side effects are worrying you or interfere with your daily activities contact the infusion Clinic on 62532100 or your GP for advice.

If you have chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness or neck/mouth swelling SEEK URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION / CALL AN AMBULANCE (000).

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