



Iron Infusion

Why do we need iron?

Our bodies need iron. Iron is used to make haemoglobin – the part of our red blood cells that carries oxygen around our body. It is also important for muscle strength, energy and good mental function. If your iron levels are low this may make you feel tired and not able to do normal daily activities. As the amount of iron in the body falls even lower, the haemoglobin level drops below normal. This is known as iron deficiency anaemia.

Why might I need IV iron?

The most common way to treat iron deficiency is to take iron by mouth as a tablet or liquid. This works well for most people and is usually tried first. Some people may need iron to be given straight into the body through a vein. This is called an Intravenous (IV) iron infusion. The iron is given through a needle and dripped ('infused') into your vein. Sometimes 2 iron infusions (given at least 1 week apart) are needed to fully top up iron stores. The infusion is made up of iron, not blood.

IV iron might be needed if you:

- Are not able to take iron tablets / liquid
- Are not responding to iron tablets / liquid or not absorbing them
- Need to get your iron levels up quickly (eg. before major surgery, late in pregnancy or to avoid blood transfusion)
- If you have chronic kidney disease or chronic heart failure
- Your doctor should explain why you need IV iron and the other options.



Are there any side effects with IV iron?

Generally, when side effects do occur, they are mild and settle down on their own. The most common side effects are temporary and include:

- Headache, feeling sick or vomiting, muscle or joint pain
- Changes in taste (eg. metallic)
- Changes to blood pressure or pulse

Skin staining (brown discolouration) may occur due to leakage of iron into the tissues around the needle (drip) site. **This is not common but the stain can be long lasting or permanent.** Inform the doctor or nurse straight away of any discomfort, burning, redness or swelling at the needle (drip) site.

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, and for 30 minutes after.

Sometimes side effects (eg. headache, muscle or joint pain) can start 1 to 2 days later. Mostly they will settle down by themselves over the next couple of days. If they worry you or interfere with your daily activities contact your doctor or infusion centre for advice.

If you have chest pain, trouble breathing, dizziness or neck / mouth swelling, please seek urgent medical attention / call an ambulance (000).