



Intravenous iron infusions

Information for patients

This leaflet answers some common questions about intravenous iron infusions, but if you still have questions after reading it, please ask your nurse, midwife or doctor.

Why do I need intravenous (IV) iron?

Iron is used to make haemoglobin (Hb), which is essential for red blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. When iron stores (ferritin) levels in the body get too low, the Hb level can fall below normal too. This is known as iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) and may cause:

- Tiredness/exhaustion
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations

The first and most common way to treat IDA is to take oral iron supplements as a tablet or liquid, which works well for most people. IV iron might be needed if your body doesn't respond to oral iron. Common reasons include:

- Unable to tolerate iron taken by mouth, eg: vomiting or severe constipation
- Unable to absorb iron through the gut, eg: weight loss surgery or coeliac disease
- Unable to take enough iron due to excessive bleeding, eg: heavy periods or haemorrhage.

Before you have IV iron:

Please tell your nurse, midwife or doctor if you:

- Are taking antibiotics or receiving treatment for any infection
- Have had a reaction to any type of iron injection or infusion in the past
- Have a history of any allergies
- Have a history of:
 - » High iron levels
 - » Haemochromatosis
 - » Liver problems
 - » Thalassemia

- Are on any medications (including over the counter or herbal supplements)
- Require:
 - » Other blood tests
 - » Other appointments
 - » A medical certificate

Possible side effects of IV iron

Patients receiving IV iron sometimes experience side effects on the day of, or in the week following, the infusion. These include:

- Headache
- Tiredness
- Pain around the IV site
- Muscle and joint pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Temporary change in taste (metallic taste)
- Shortness of breath
- Changes in blood pressure
- Itchiness, rash
- Flu-like symptoms
- Abdominal pain

A life-threatening, severe allergic reaction is possible but rare. Inform your nurse, midwife or doctor (if in hospital) or call an ambulance 000 (if at home) immediately if you experience:

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Itchiness or swelling in your throat

If the solution leaks out of the vein at the IV cannula/needle site, a permanent skin stain might occur (this is rare: about 1:1000). During the infusion, inform your nurse or doctor if your IV cannula or the skin around it becomes:

- Painful
- Swollen

IV iron is only prescribed for IDA when the benefits outweigh the risks or side effects to you.

Your iron infusion

Different types of iron take different lengths of time to infuse. All patients are observed for 30 minutes after their Infusion is complete.

Today you will be having:

- 1000mg Ferric Carboxymaltose
 - 40-minute infusion
- _____mg Iron Polymaltose
 - Pregnant women (three-hour infusion)
 - Non pregnant women (two-hour infusion)
- Other _____

After the iron infusion

Avoid strenuous activity in the 48 hours (two days) after your iron infusion as it may increase joint pain. This includes:

- » Heavy lifting (such as carrying shopping)
- » Gym/fitness classes
- » Strenuous exercise (such as housework).
- Iron tablets can be stopped for seven days.
- Most symptoms go away without treatment and should not affect your daily activities. However, if your symptoms persist or you are concerned contact:
 - » Your GP
 - » If you are more than 20 weeks pregnant, the Maternal Foetal Assessment Unit (MFAU) on (08) 6458 2199 (24 hours)
 - » Healthdirect on 1800 022 022 (24 hours, seven days a week)
 - » Clinical nurse consultant – Haematology (08) 6458 2733 (Monday to Friday only, 7am to 3.30pm).



Women and Newborn Health Service

King Edward Memorial Hospital

📍 374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008

☎ (08) 6458 2222

🌐 kemh.health.wa.gov.au

If you have chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness or throat/mouth swelling, seek urgent medical attention. Call an ambulance on 000.

It is important that you have your blood tested after your infusion to ensure you have responded to the treatment and your blood levels have returned to normal

You will be provided with a form by the staff at the time of your infusion or through the mail.

Please get your blood tested:

- Four weeks after your iron infusion
- Four weeks after your baby is born

What will my iron infusion cost?

Medicare-eligible patients who attend hospital may have to pay for the cost of the drug. There is no fee for inpatients remaining in hospital.

- Fee may be payable if you:
 - » Are an inpatient having your iron infusion on the day of discharge
 - » Are an outpatient (have come in from home to have your iron infusion).
- A subsidised invoice will be posted to your home in the following four to six weeks
 - » Health Care cardholders will pay under \$10
 - » Medicare-eligible, non-Health Care cardholders will pay about \$42.

Patients not eligible for Medicare must check with their private health insurer and liaise with the clinical nurse consultant, Patient Blood Management, before having an iron infusion as the cost is more than \$2800. You will be required to pay for your treatment if you are not covered by private health insurance or Medicare.



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