

Patient Blood Management

IV Iron Therapy

Understanding your treatment choice

Please read this leaflet carefully. It is a summary on intravenous (IV) iron therapy which is part of your hospital treatment.

What is iron?

Iron is an essential nutrient for your body. It is an important part of haemoglobin (Hb), the red pigment which gives blood its colour and which carries oxygen around your body. You need iron so your body can make new haemoglobin and red blood cells to carry the oxygen that your body requires. It is very important therefore that you have enough iron in your blood. If you don't you may develop anaemia. This is known as iron-deficiency anaemia and is the most common type of anaemia.

Why do I need IV iron?

Your doctor may have prescribed you IV iron because your blood results have shown that the amount of iron you have in your blood is low and/or because you are feeling the effects of iron deficiency anaemia.

Factors that can lower your body's supply of iron include:

- Blood loss (caused by ulcers, some cancers and other conditions and monthly periods)
- A diet that doesn't have enough iron in it
- Taking medications that interfere with the ability of the body to absorb iron
- An increase in the body's need for iron (for example: in women during pregnancy)



Patient Information

There are several symptoms that may occur in all types of anaemia. They are:

- Fatigue/tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness and light-headedness
- Pale skin colour
- A sore tongue
- Unusual cravings for non-food substances, such as dirt, ice, paint, or clay.
- Thin nails that may start to curve backward (called spoon nails)
- Poor muscle performance (for example, you may not be able to exercise for as long as usual)
- Restless leg syndrome. This means you have an irresistible urge to move your legs to relieve uncomfortable sensations, such as itching or a 'crawling' feeling.
- Feeling cold (including the sensation that your hands and feet are colder than usual)

You may however have no obvious symptoms if your anaemia is mild or develops slowly over time.

What are the likely benefits of IV iron?

Your blood iron level will increase and this may result in your haemoglobin increasing as well. You may notice that you are less tired, have more energy, better concentration and become less breathless when exercising.

How will I receive IV iron?

A small needle will be placed in a vein in your hand or arm. The iron will be given through a drip which takes approximately 15 minutes. You will be monitored closely before, during the 15 minute infusion and after for at least 30 minutes.

How many infusions will I need?

You may only need a single dose of IV iron or you may need to return for further treatments to complete your course. Once you have finished your course of treatment you may be asked to return to have a further blood test to assess your progress. At future appointments, your doctor or nurse will continue to check that the amount of iron in your body stays within the right range for you. You may also need further courses of treatment in the future.

What reactions might I have to iron?

Potential mild side effects occur in 1-10% percent of patients. These include headaches, dizziness, rash, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, muscle cramps, diarrhoea, constipation, abnormal liver function, flushing, low or high blood pressure and injection site reactions. **These reactions can occur any time you receive IV iron so your nurse will monitor you closely at each appointment.** The risk of an allergic reaction is increased in patients with known allergies, inflammatory conditions such as lupus, any drug allergies and severe asthma or eczema.

Before you receive iron injections

Please **stop taking your iron tablets** the day before coming to your first appointment.

You should not receive iron injections if:-

- You are known to be sensitive (allergic) to any iron preparations intended for intramuscular or intravenous administration
- You are known to have damage to your liver
- You have any acute or chronic infections
- IV iron should not be used during pregnancy unless absolutely necessary and not in the first three months

Can I drive home after my infusion?

You may feel dizzy, confused or light-headed after being given IV iron. If this happens, do not drive or use any tool or machinery.

Patient Information

Using IV iron and not blood

IV iron is not a blood product. Although blood transfusion is safe, there are some risks, including a tiny risk of infection. IV iron does not have the risks of blood transfusion. If you have iron deficient anaemia, a blood transfusion is not an appropriate treatment as it does not solve the underlying problem of low iron levels.

Pregnancy and breast-feeding

It is important to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby. If you become pregnant during treatment you must ask your doctor for advice. Your doctor will decide whether or not you should be given this treatment. If you are breast-feeding ask your doctor for advice before you are given IV iron. If you are pregnant or breast-feeding ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before taking **any** medicine.

Please keep this sheet for your own records:

Date: _____

If you require any further information about anaemia please contact Michelle Brazier Patient Blood Management Practitioner on 024 7696 6911 or the Hospital Transfusion Team by ringing 024 7696 4000 extension 25469 or 25436

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email: feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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