

Intravenous Iron

An information guide



Intravenous Iron

Before treatment

What does this mean?

Your blood tests have shown that you have iron deficiency anaemia and your doctor has prescribed intravenous iron because you need to correct the iron levels in your body.

Why is iron important?

Iron is important because it helps your body to make haemoglobin. Haemoglobin, or 'Hb', is the protein found in red blood cells that carries oxygen around your body and gives blood its red colour.

What can happen if you have low iron levels?

If the level of iron in your body falls, your red blood cells may not contain enough haemoglobin. At first, you may not notice any difference. However, if the amount of haemoglobin falls further, you may start to feel tired. If the shortage of haemoglobin is more severe, you may feel unusually weak or breathless.

This is called anaemia.

There are different types of anaemia, but the most common type is caused by a shortage of iron. Getting enough iron will help your body to work more efficiently and may speed up your recovery following an operation.

Before you receive iron injections

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

Inform your doctor or nurse

- If you are unwell with an infection
- You have problems with asthma, eczema or problems with allergies or inflammation
- If you are taking any other medications or over the counter remedies or herbal medicines. This is because the iron injection can affect the way some medicines work. Also some other medicines can affect the way the injection works

If you are not sure if any of the above applies to you, talk to your doctor or nurse before having intravenous iron.

During treatment:

How will the iron be given?

Intravenous iron is given directly into a vein.

The infusion will run into your vein from a drip, and you will be monitored by a nurse throughout the procedure. Intravenous iron can also be given via injection in the vein if only small doses are required.

How long will the procedure take?

The time used for an infusion depends on your body weight and the iron dose needed. An infusion will take approximately 30 minutes. You will be observed for 30 minutes by your nurse following each administration.

Are there any side effects during treatment?

Like all medicines intravenous iron can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. The most significant side effect is an allergic reaction which occurs in less than 1% of patients.

You should tell your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of the symptoms below:

- Shortness of breath or feeling of tightness in the chest
- Nettle rash or hives, flushing, rashes, itching

An uncommon side effect during treatment is feeling light headed, sick and dizzy. If you have these symptoms please tell your nurse or doctor.

Are there any side effects after treatment?

Other uncommon side effects include:

- Blurred vision
- Numbness
- Constipation
- Pain in and around the stomach
- Soreness and swelling at the injection site

Rare side effects include:

- lowering of blood pressure
- Chest pain
- Fast pulse
- Muscular aches and pains
- Fever
- Rashes
- Skin flushing
- Swelling of hands and feet.

Severe side effects are rare:

The most common is a metallic taste in your mouth; this usually disappears within 15 minutes. If you feel dizzy or unwell during the treatment, please tell your nurse or doctor so they can adjust your treatment.

If this happens after you have left the clinic, please go to your GP or your nearest Accident and Emergency Department and tell them you have had an iron injection.

This may be an allergic reaction to the iron and you will be given antihistamine medication.

After treatment:

When will I feel the effect?

The time it takes to feel any improvement varies for each individual. Some people will feel better after only a couple of days, while others will feel an improvement after a few weeks or a month.

Are there any alternatives?

You can take iron tablets but the time for your blood count and iron level to improve is longer and may not be sufficient time if you have a date booked for your surgery.

What happens after treatment?

A new blood sample will usually be taken some weeks or months after the treatment to determine if your body's iron stores are fully corrected. By doing this, your doctor will be able to determine if you need further treatment.

Some patients need more than one treatment, and if you have a chronic disease that is causing your iron deficiency it is normal for an iron treatment to be repeated.

Ward/department:

.....

Contact telephone number(s):

Daytime

.....

Night time/weekends

.....

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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