



Patient & Family Guide

2024

Intravenous (I.V.) Iron Infusions



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Intravenous (I.V.) Iron Infusions

You are having an I.V. iron infusion today to help your body make more red blood cells.

Red blood cells help:

- › Increase the amount of oxygen in your body
- › Lower the need for blood transfusions

What is iron deficiency?

Your body needs iron to make red blood cells.

When your body does not get enough iron, it cannot make enough red blood cells to keep you healthy. This is called iron deficiency, or iron deficiency anemia. Sometimes, people may need to take iron before surgery.

Iron deficiency may cause:

- › Tiredness
- › Trouble breathing
- › Cravings (like an urge to eat ice cubes)
- › Learning difficulties
- › A higher chance of getting an infection

Why is my iron low?

- Low iron can be caused by:
 - › Losing a lot of blood during your periods
 - › Losing blood from cancer or cancer treatments

- › Not eating enough iron-rich foods (especially if you do not eat red meat)
- › Digestive problems (like inflammatory bowel disease [IBD], celiac disease, or if you recently had gastric bypass surgery)
- › Donating blood often
- › Recent surgery
- › Pregnancy
- › Some health conditions

How is iron deficiency treated?

- Iron deficiency is treated by taking iron. You can take iron by:
 - › Mouth (also called orally), like a tablet
 - › Infusion into a vein (also called intravenous, or I.V. infusion).

You will get iron through an I.V. infusion before and after surgery if you have iron deficiency and:

- › you cannot take iron by mouth.
- › your body is not responding to iron taken by mouth.
- › you are a patient in the Perioperative Blood Management Program (PBMP) and need to build up your blood supply before surgery.

What does the health care team need to know before I get an I.V. iron infusion?

- Before we give you an infusion, we will ask if you:
 - › have had any allergic reactions to I.V. iron in the past.
 - › have any food or medication allergies. If you have a known allergy, please wear your MedicAlert® bracelet while you are in the hospital getting your infusion.
 - › are pregnant.



How do I get ready for my infusion?

If you are taking iron pills, stop taking them before your infusion. After your infusion, take your iron pills as told by your health care provider.

On the day of your infusion:

- › **You do not need to do anything special to get ready for your infusion.**
- › You may eat and drink as usual. Eat and drink water before coming for your infusion.
- › You may take any medications or supplements (other than iron pills) as usual.

How is an I.V. iron infusion given?

1. The infusion will be done in the Ambulatory Care Clinic before your surgery. A doctor or a nurse practitioner will monitor you during the infusion.
2. The infusion may take 1 ½ to 4 hours (depending on the type of iron). A nurse will check your blood pressure and pulse often. You may need to have more than 1 infusion.
3. **Do not take any medications that have iron in them for at least 5 days after getting an I.V. iron infusion.**
4. Keep eating foods that have high levels of iron (like beef liver, clams, molasses, and cereal with added iron). This can help your treatment work better.
 - › The recommended amount of iron you should get from food each day varies (see the table on the next page).
 - › People who do not eat meat, fish, or poultry may need to get more iron from eggs and plant foods (like fruits, vegetables, legumes [peas, lentils, beans], grains, milks made from nuts or grains, nuts and seeds).
 - › Tea, coffee, and milk can lower the amount of iron your body can absorb (take in). Drink tea, coffee, and milk at least 1 hour before or after eating eating foods that are rich in iron.

How much iron do I need each day?

Group	Age (in years)	Amount of daily iron
Adults	• 19 and older	• 8 mg
	• 19 to 50 who have periods	• 18 mg
Pregnant people	• 19 to 50	• 27 mg
Breastfeeding or chestfeeding people	• 19 to 50	• 9 mg
Teens	• 9 to 13	• 8 mg
	• 14 to 18	• 11 mg
Children	• 1 to 3	• 7 mg
	• 4 to 7	• 10 mg

Institute of Medicine (US) Panel on Micronutrients. (2001). *Dietary Reference Intakes for Vitamin A, Vitamin K, Arsenic, Boron, Chromium, Copper, Iodine, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, Nickel, Silicon, Vanadium, and Zinc*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK222310/>

What are the possible side effects?

Your health care provider will talk with you about possible side effects before your infusion.

Possible side effects:

- › Low blood pressure
- › Headache
- › Muscle ache
- › Cramping (usually in the legs)
- › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- › Vomiting (throwing up)
- › Constipation (not being able to poop)
- › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- › A metallic taste in your mouth
- › Feeling dizzy
- › Chest discomfort or pain
- › Hives, rash, itchiness
- › Soreness or an infection where the I.V. needle entered your skin.

These problems are usually mild. They will likely go away without treatment within a few days. Most people feel better within 1 week (7 days).

- Take an over-the-counter pain medication (like Tylenol® or ibuprofen) if you have flu-like symptoms, like:
 - › Headache
 - › Tiredness
 - › Muscle aches
 - › A fever
(temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- Take over-the-counter pain medication (like Tylenol® or ibuprofen) 1 hour before your next infusion to prevent these symptoms.

During your infusion, tell your nurse (or the person giving you the infusion) right away if you have:

- › Trouble breathing, or tightness in your chest, back, and/or throat
- › Dizziness or feel light-headed
- › Hives, a rash, or itchiness
- › Swelling in your mouth, tongue, throat, face, hands, or legs

If you have any of these symptoms when you get home, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

**After your Emergency Department visit,
you must call your health care provider:**

If you are a PBMP patient, call the PBMP:

- › Phone: 902-473-3117 or 902-473-8776

If you are not a PBMP patient:

- › Call Dr: _____
- › Phone: _____

OR

- › Call the health care provider who ordered your infusion.

If you have any of the symptoms listed on page 6, or if you have other symptoms and you are not sure if they are from your iron infusion, call your health care providers:

If you are a PBMP patient, call the PBMP:

- › Phone: 902-473-3117 or 902-473-8776

If you are not a PBMP patient:

- › Call Dr: _____
- › Phone: _____

OR

- › Call the health care provider who ordered your infusion.

Do not have this infusion if you have any of these health problems:

- › your body is not able to use iron the way it should, causing you to have too much iron.
- › your red blood cells are being destroyed, causing you to have too much iron.

If you have any questions, please talk with your health care provider.

Will I need lab tests during my treatment?

- Your doctor or nurse practitioner may order tests during your treatment to find out if the treatment is working, or if you need more infusions.

How many infusions will I need?

- This will depend on your lab test results.
 - › You may need 1 to 4 iron infusions. This will depend on the type of iron you are getting.
- Each infusion is usually scheduled 2 to 7 days apart.

If you have any problems or questions:

If you are a PBMP patient call the PBMP:

- › Phone: 902-473-3117 or 902-473-8776

If you are not a PBMP patient:

- › Call Dr: _____

- › Phone: _____

OR

- › Call the health care provider who ordered your infusion.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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