

Patient Information

INTRAVENOUS IRON INFUSION

This information sheet addresses some commonly asked questions about intravenous iron infusions. Please note that it does not contain all information that is available and it is not a substitute for talking with your provider regarding your specific situation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IRON

Iron is a mineral needed by the body for growth, development and overall health and well-being. In particular, iron is used to make haemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells responsible for transporting oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Iron is also required by the body for brain and muscle function, energy and hormone production, enzyme creation and overall immune system health.

WHAT IS AN IRON INFUSION

An iron infusion is a way to deliver iron directly into the bloodstream via a small catheter in your vein. Intravenous (IV) iron supplementation is another name for this.

REFERRAL + SCRIPT

You will require a referral and prescription from a General Practitioner (GP) or Specialist to receive an iron infusion at The Iron Infusion Clinic. Your GP or Specialist will have access to a paper or electronic referral form, and can also access from our website.

REASONS FOR HAVING AN IRON INFUSION

The most common method for addressing iron deficiency is to take iron orally, in the form of a tablet or liquid. This is effective for most people and is typically the first line of treatment. For some people however, this may be ineffective or poorly tolerated and an iron infusion is required.

Reasons that your GP may have requested an iron infusion include if you:

- ✿ Have restless leg syndrome
- ✿ Are anaemic and have not responded to oral iron, or iron tablets have made you unwell
- ✿ Are pre-surgery and need to raise iron levels quickly to avoid a blood transfusion

Please note that the iron used in the iron infusion is not a blood product and therefore does not carry the risks associated with blood transfusions.

SUITABILITY FOR AN IRON INFUSION

Stop any iron tablets one week prior to your scheduled iron infusion, as this can affect the infused iron being absorbed.

You should not have an iron infusion if you:

- ✿ Are currently taking antibiotics
- ✿ Have an infection
- ✿ Have anaemia caused by deficiencies other than iron (such as B12 deficiency)
- ✿ Have been told by a doctor that you have an 'iron overload'
- ✿ Have had an anaphylactic allergic reaction to iron given to you by an intravenous infusion in the past
- ✿ Have liver disease, severe infection or inflammation of the kidney or liver
- ✿ First trimester of pregnancy
- ✿ Are under 14 years old

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SIDE EFFECTS, RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS OF IRON INFUSIONS

As with all medicines and medical procedures, there are risks and complications associated with iron infusions. Risks include, but are not limited to:

Common side effects (occurs in under 1-10% of cases) include:

- ✿ Headache
- ✿ Dizziness
- ✿ Flu like symptoms
- ✿ High or low blood pressure
- ✿ Flushes
- ✿ Nausea
- ✿ Bruising or skin reaction at the infusion site
- ✿ Low blood phosphate levels (hypophosphataemia) (certain iron products only)

Uncommon side effects (occurs in under 1% of cases) include:

- ✿ Injection site reactions – **discolouration / staining** of the skin may occur as a result of an iron infusion. Whilst this is uncommon, the discolouration can be long lasting or permanent. This will be discussed with you during the consent process.
- ✿ Stomach upsets (vomiting, indigestion, stomach pain, diarrhoea, constipation)
- ✿ Fast heart rate, low blood pressure
- ✿ Changes in taste (e.g. metallic taste)
- ✿ Muscle and joint pains, backache and muscle cramps
- ✿ Tiredness, chills, chest pain, swelling, pins and needles, high temperature, itching, rash
- ✿ Shortness of breath
- ✿ Anaphylaxis

PREPARING FOR AN IRON INFUSION

It is not necessary to fast, and you can take your normal medications prior to an iron infusion. Iron tablets / liquid however should be stopped 7 days before.

Filling Your Script

Please ensure that you fill your prescription provided to you by your General Practitioner or Specialist prior to your appointment. We strongly recommend to fill the prescription a few days prior, which will allow your pharmacy time to order stock in if required.

Hydration

It is important to be well hydrated prior to your iron infusion, drink 2 to 3 glasses of water prior to your appointment. It may be necessary to reschedule your infusion if a suitable vein cannot be found.

Clothing

It is recommended to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing. If you are wearing long sleeves, they will need to be loose enough to be pushed up well above your elbow. It is also suggested to bring a cardigan or jacket to provide warmth if required.

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How Long Will The Infusion Take?

The iron infusion will take 15 - 30 minutes, however please allow 60 minutes in total for your appointment as there is a 30 minute observation period post infusion.

HOW ARE IRON INFUSIONS GIVEN?

Iron infusions are administered at Academy Day Hospital, which is located in the same building as Academy Face and Body (separate entrance).

During your appointment, your nurse will discuss the iron infusion treatment, ask some questions, go through the consent form with you and answer any questions that you may have.

Parents and guardians of minors aged 14 to 17 years of age will be required to provide consent on behalf of the minor. A parent or guardian may also sit with the minor during the infusion.

Prior to starting the treatment, your nurse will measure and record your heart rate, blood pressure and temperature.

A cannula (small plastic tube) will then be inserted (via a needle) into a vein in your arm, and connected to a sterile bag containing the iron to be infused. Your nurse will continue to monitor you, however it is important to inform the nurse should you feel unwell or if you are experiencing any side effects during the infusion.

You will also be monitored for any delayed reactions for 30 minutes after the infusion has finished. Please inform the nurse if you feel unwell during this time. After 30 minutes, the cannula will be removed and you can go home.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE IRON INFUSION

You may feel tired and your urine will appear darker in colour the next day, this is normal following an iron infusion. Please ensure you rest and stay well hydrated.

If you do experience any common side effects, they are usually mild and will settle down on their own. Panadol can be taken for any discomfort.

If you develop any anaphylactic reaction symptoms such as difficulty breathing, a swollen tongue or throat, chest pain, hives or itching please call 000.

Avoid physical exercise for 48 hours after your iron infusion to avoid muscle pains.

The treatment does not affect your ability to drive.

Most patients notice the symptoms of having low iron levels, such as tiredness and dizziness, reduce within 2 weeks of having an iron infusion.

Your referring GP or specialist will likely wish to see you again for follow up blood tests 4 - 8 weeks after the iron infusion. Please contact your GP or specialist to determine whether an appointment is required. Your GP or specialist will then decide whether you require any further iron infusions.

Do not take oral iron tablets / liquid once you have had the iron infusion. Further discussion will be required with your GP or specialist before restarting iron tablets / liquid.