

Iron Infusions

Patient / relative information leaflet

Please read this leaflet carefully and discuss any questions you may have with your doctor or nurse.

Why am I being treated with this medicine?

Your blood test results show that the amount of iron you have in your blood is low. The most common way to treat this is to take iron by mouth as a tablet or liquid. This works well for most people and is usually tried first. However, some people may need iron to be given straight into the body through a vein. This is called an iron infusion. It might be needed if you:

- are not able to take iron tablets or liquid
- are not responding to iron tablets or liquid or not absorbing them
- if you have chronic heart failure.

Why is iron important?

Iron is an essential nutrient that your body needs to make red blood cells, which carry oxygen around your body. If you do not have enough iron, you can become anaemic. This can cause tiredness, low energy levels, low mood, feeling faint and breathlessness.

Do I still need to take iron tablets/liquid?

If you are taking iron tablets or liquid these should be stopped before you receive the infusion. They are usually not needed after the treatment.

What does the infusion involve?

The treatment takes place in a hospital. A thin plastic tube called a cannula is placed in your vein and attached to an infusion that slowly delivers a liquid solution containing iron into the body.

Will I feel any pain?

You may feel a slight sting when the cannula is inserted to give the infusion. You should feel no pain during the iron infusion. If you do feel any pain, you should let nursing staff know immediately.

How long will it take?

It can take up to 60 minutes to complete the infusion. You will be monitored by nursing staff closely before, during and for 30 minutes following the infusion.

How often will I need an infusion?

Sometimes two iron infusions (given at least one week apart) are needed to fully top up your iron stores.

What are the most likely side effects?

Generally when side effects do occur, they are mild and settle down on their own. The most common side effects are temporary and include:

- headache, feeling sick or vomiting, muscle or joint pain
- changes in taste (e.g. metallic)
- changes to blood pressure or pulse.

What are the risks?

Rarely, you may experience a serious allergic reaction. If this happens you may experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- feeling dizzy
- fast pulse
- feeling light headed or faint due to a low blood pressure
- swelling in your face, lips, tongue, throat or body
- difficulty in breathing
- chest pain
- itchy skin, a rash or skin redness.

Injection/infusion site reactions are common. This can include skin staining (brown discolouration) that may be long lasting due to leakage of iron into the tissues around the cannula site. This may require further medical intervention.

You should tell your Doctor or nurse immediately if you:

- **Feel unwell before, during or after the treatment.**
- **Experience any discomfort, burning, redness or swelling at the cannula site.**

What happens after the infusion?

Unless you have an unexpected reaction, you will be able to drive home and do your normal activities. Before leaving ensure that you have:

- The number to contact if you have any worries or questions
- The dates for any follow up tests and / or appointments.

Sometimes side effects can start one to two days after the infusion. These will generally settle down without treatment over the next few days. If you are worried, or the side effects are interfering with your daily activities, please contact your GP for advice. If you have chest pain, difficulty breathing, dizziness or neck or mouth swelling CALL AN AMBULANCE (999).

Who can I talk to if I have any questions?

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet, or your treatment with an iron infusion, please discuss these with your doctor or nurse