



Patient & Family Guide

2026

Oral Irons and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)



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Oral Irons and CKD

What are oral irons?

- Oral irons are a group of medications that treat low iron levels in the body, which can happen when you have kidney disease.
- Oral irons have many brand names and come in several forms.

Type of oral iron	Form
Ferrous sulfate	Tablet or liquid
Ferrous gluconate	Tablet
Ferrous fumarate	Tablet, capsule, or liquid
Polysaccharide-iron complex (FeraMAX® 150)	Capsule or powder

Why do I need to take this medication?

- Your red blood cells need iron to help carry oxygen through your body.
- When your body does not have enough iron, it will not get enough oxygen and you may feel tired or short of breath.
- Many people with CKD have anemia (not enough red blood cells or hemoglobin in the blood).
 - › Hemoglobin is the oxygen-carrying part of your red blood cells. Taking oral irons will give you enough iron to make hemoglobin. This will make sure your body gets enough oxygen.
- When you have CKD, you may not make enough EPO (erythropoietin). This causes you to have less red blood cells, which causes anemia. Some people with CKD need a medication called **erythropoiesis-stimulating agent** (ESA) to do the work of EPO.
- For ESA to work its best, you need enough iron.

How do I take oral irons?

- Swallow the tablets or capsules whole.
Do not crush, chew, dissolve, or break them. If you have trouble swallowing them, ask your pharmacist to prepare a liquid or powder form.
 - › FeraMAX® 150 can be taken with or without food. For all other irons, take 1 hour before a meal **or** 2 hours after a meal.
 - › Take it at the same time every day.
 - › Take it with food if your stomach feels upset.
 - › **Do not** miss a dose (amount). If you forget a dose, skip it. **Do not take 2 doses at the same time.**
 - › Some medications (like Tums®) cannot be taken at the same time as oral iron. Your pharmacist can help you with timing your medications.

Are there any side effects?

- The most common side effects are:
 - › Nausea (upset stomach)
 - › Vomiting (throwing up)
 - › Constipation (not being able to poop)
 - › Indigestion (heartburn)
 - › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
 - › Black poop

How should I store this medication?

- Store it at room temperature (15 to 25 °C) and away from damp areas like the bathroom.
- Store it out of the reach of children and pets.

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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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Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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