

Intravenous (I.V.) Iron Infusions

Medical Day Unit

Intravenous (I.V.) Iron Infusions

What is iron deficiency?

- Iron deficiency is when your body does not have enough iron. Your body needs iron to make red blood cells.
- When your body does not have enough iron, it cannot make enough red blood cells to keep you healthy. This can lead to anemia (low hemoglobin levels in your red blood cells).

What are the symptoms of iron deficiency?

- Common symptoms include:
 - › Pale skin, gums, and fingernail beds
 - › Sore tongue
 - › Tiredness
 - › Trouble breathing
 - › Fast heartbeat
 - › Trouble doing your usual activities
 - › Food cravings or cravings for unusual things, like ice
 - › Higher chance of getting an infection

How is iron deficiency treated?

- Your body does not make iron on its own. You must get iron through food or supplements.
- Iron deficiency is treated by taking iron supplements to raise your body's iron levels.
You can take iron by:
 - › Mouth (also called orally), like a tablet
 - › Infusion into a vein (also called intravenous or I.V. infusion)
- You may need an I.V. iron infusion if:
 - › You are not able to tolerate oral iron tablets
 - › Oral iron is not raising your hemoglobin level
 - › You need your hemoglobin level raised quickly, like before surgery

You may need more than 1 infusion.

Tell your health care team if:

- › You have had any allergic reactions to I.V. iron in the past.
- › You have any food or medication allergies.
- › You are pregnant.

Before your appointment

- You will have blood work to check your iron level.
- You will have an appointment with a health care provider who can prescribe I.V. iron infusions.
- You will get an appointment at an outpatient care unit for your iron infusion.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a healthy meal before your infusion appointment.
- **The 1st time you receive an infusion, someone should come with you in case you have a reaction.**

What will happen at my infusion appointment?

- Your appointment may take 1 to 4 hours.
- Your health care provider will insert (put in) an I.V. into a vein in your arm or hand.
- They will monitor your vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, oxygen level, and temperature).
- **Tell your health care provider if you do not feel well at any time.**

What are the possible side effects?

Possible side effects include:

- › Dark-coloured urine (pee)
- › Headache
- › Tiredness
- › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- › Muscle cramps
- › Bone and/or joint aches
- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F) for a few days
- › Soreness where the I.V. entered your skin

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Tell your health care provider right away if you have any symptoms of a serious reaction:

- › Itching or a rash
- › Chills
- › Vomiting (throwing up)
- › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)

If you have any of the following symptoms after you leave the unit, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away:

- › Swelling of your face or tongue
- › Trouble breathing
- › Chest pain or tightness
- › Your heart is racing or has a different type of beat
- › Dizziness or feeling faint
- Make sure you tell your health care team that you have recently had an I.V. iron infusion.

What will happen after my appointment?

- Your health care provider who prescribed the I.V. iron infusion may ask you to have blood work done in 30 days (1 month). This is to check your iron levels.

- Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) will give you a requisition (form) for your blood work.
- **Do not** take any medications that have iron in them for 14 days after getting an I.V. iron infusion, or as directed by your health care provider.

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.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: Hematology Clinic and Medical Day Unit, Central Zone
Designed and Managed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WH85-2506 © July 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority
To be reviewed July 2028 or sooner, if needed.
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>