



Patient & Family Guide  
2020

# Oral Irons and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)



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# Oral Irons and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)

## What are oral irons?

- Oral irons are a group of medicines that include ferrous sulfate, ferrous gluconate, ferrous fumarate, and FeraMAX<sup>®</sup> 150.
- Oral irons are available under many brand names and 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 <sup>®</sup> 150)	capsule or powder

## Why does someone with CKD need this medicine?

- Your red blood cells need iron to help carry oxygen through your body.
- When your body does not get enough oxygen due to lack of iron, 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 your red blood cell count to drop and anemia to develop. Some people with CKD need a medicine 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 all oral iron tablets and capsules whole. **DO NOT** crush, chew, dissolve, or break. If you have trouble swallowing, tell your pharmacist so they can prepare a liquid or powder form.

- FeraMAX<sup>®</sup> 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 at the same time every day.
- Take with food **if** your stomach feels upset.
- Do not miss a dose. If you forget a dose, skip it. **Do not take a double dose.**

- Some medications can't be taken at the same time as oral iron (like Tums®). 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 (hard to poop)
- › Indigestion (heartburn)
- › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- › Black poop

## How should I store this medicine?

- Store it at room temperature and away from damp areas like the bathroom.
- Store it out of children's reach.

### Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.