

Patient information

Iron Infusion

Liverpool University Hospitals

Your clinician has advised you to have an iron infusion.

What is an iron infusion?

Some people have low iron stores in the body. Low iron stores (iron deficiency) can result in a reduction in the number of red blood cells circulating around the body (anaemia). This is called Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA). 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 (an iron infusion).

What are the benefits of having an iron infusion?

A common symptom of IDA is tiredness with patients reporting feeling exhausted, lethargic and weak. Other symptoms include breathlessness, irregular heartbeats, headaches and dizziness. Ideally, the symptoms experienced due to IDA will start to resolve as the amount of iron in the blood increases. This can take several weeks as the iron infusion helps to build a person's iron stores back up and the anaemia resolves.

The aim of iron infusion:

An iron infusion is a way to increase the body's iron levels quickly. It is a more immediate treatment than tablets, liquids or dietary changes.

What are the risks of having an iron infusion?

As with all medicines iron infusion can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

Reactions at the injection site are considered common and include redness, swelling, burning, pain, bruising, discolouration and/or irritation at the site of injection. Other common side effects include nausea, headache, dizziness, flu like symptoms and high or low blood pressure.

On rare occasions skin staining can occur from the intravenous iron infusion. This can be significant and permanent. If you experience any discomfort during the infusion, it is important that you tell a member of the team immediately.

Tell your clinician if you develop worsening of tiredness, muscle and/or bone pain following your infusion (pain in your arms or legs, joints or back). This may be a sign of low phosphate levels in your body. If your phosphate is low for a long time without treatment this may cause your bones to become soft (osteomalacia) and increase your risk of broken bones. This isn't a common complication and can often be corrected with phosphate supplements by mouth.

There is a low risk of experiencing a severe allergic reaction (called anaphylaxis) with all iron treatments given directly into your vein. This can cause symptoms such as swelling of the face, tongue and mouth. It may also cause difficulty in breathing. The nurse who is treating you will monitor you for signs of anaphylaxis and will provide emergency treatment if required. It is important to remember that this reaction is rare.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Are there any alternative treatments available?

You may try oral iron supplements as an alternative, however, for a person with iron deficiency who cannot take or does not get better with oral iron supplements, iron infusions are one option for increasing their iron levels.

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 will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

If you decide not to have treatment and you are not taking any iron tablets, your anaemia may not improve. This might mean that your symptoms may get worse.

Getting ready for your iron infusion:

For the privacy of other patients having treatment at the same time we advise that if you have a relative or friend who attends with you, they will not be allowed to stay on the day ward during your infusion.

Please leave cash and valuables at home where possible. If you need to bring valuables into hospital, these can be sent to General Office for safekeeping if required.

The day of your iron infusion:

Your iron infusion will be given directly into a vein through a drip. The infusion is given over 15 - 30 minutes and you will be observed for any side effects for a further 30 minutes after completion of treatment. A nurse will monitor your blood pressure and pulse rate throughout your infusion. Please tell the nurse if you feel unwell or think that you may be experiencing any side effects whilst you are treated.

You may feel a slight sting when the drip 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.

Going home

After your infusion your drip will be removed, you may be offered something to eat and drink and will then be able to go home. You may only need a single dose of iron infusion or you may need to return for further treatments to complete your course. If a second treatment is required, you will be given an appointment for this before you leave the day ward.

Discharge information

The nurse who administered your infusion will provide you with any aftercare information that is required.

Pain relief and medication

You shouldn't experience any pain after your iron infusion and you can continue to take any medication as normal.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Please use the below contact details if you require further information. Contact the team who have made the decision for you to have an iron infusion.

Royal/Broadgreen Hospitals

- **Renal anaemia team: 0151 706 3607**
- **Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC): 0151 706 2527**
- **Clinical Haematology: 0151 706 3397**
- **Gastroenterology: 0151 706 4517 / 0151 706 2008**
- **Heart Failure Nurses: 0151 706 3274**

Aintree Hospital

- **Heart Failure Nurses: 0151 529 2690**
- **Iron Deficiency Anaemia Nurses: 0151 529 3385**
- **AUH IBD Nurses: 0151 529 4801**
- **Renal Anaemia Nurse: 0151 529 4612**

**Author: Clinical Haematology/Renal/Emergency Dept/Gastroenterology
and Cardiology pharmacists.**

Date: July 2027

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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