

Intravenous (IV) iron therapy in Pregnancy

What is Iron?

Iron is an essential nutrient for your body. It is an important part of haemoglobin (Hb), the red pigment which gives blood its colour and which carries oxygen around your body.

Why do I need Iron infusions?

Your blood results have shown that the amount of iron you have in your blood is low.

You need iron so your body can make new haemoglobin and red blood cells to carry the oxygen your body requires.

Treatment usually involves taking iron orally and changing your diet to increase your iron levels. If you cannot tolerate oral iron or your doctor decides you need iron very quickly to build up your iron stores, then it can also be given by intravenous infusion.

What are the likely benefits of Iron infusions?

Your iron levels will increase and this will usually lead to your haemoglobin increasing as well. You may notice that you are less tired, have more energy, better concentration and become less breathless when taking exercise.

Who is not suitable for intravenous iron?

- Women who are known to be sensitive (allergic) to any iron preparations intended for intramuscular or intravenous administration.
- Women with severe asthma, eczema or atopic allergy

- Women who are known to have liver damage.
- Women who have any acute or chronic infections.

If you are not sure if any of the above applies to you, talk to your doctor or midwife before having an Iron infusion.

Please tell your doctor or midwife if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines. This includes medicines obtained without a prescription and herbal medicines. This is because IV iron can affect the way some medicines work. Also some other medicines can affect the way IV iron works.

What are the risks / side effects of intravenous iron?

Side effects are usually mild, but it is important to report any unusual or unexpected symptoms you may be feeling to the nurse looking after you.

The most common reaction is a metallic taste in your mouth. This normally disappears within 15 minutes.

You may also feel light headed, sick or dizzy.

Other rare side effects that you may notice following treatment of iron include, lowering of blood pressure, tingling or numbness of the limbs, abdominal discomfort, muscular aches and pains, fever, rashes, skin flushing, swelling of the hands and feet and very rarely, anaphylactic like reactions (e.g. paleness, swollen lips, itchiness, weakness, sweating, dizziness, feeling of tightness in the chest, chest pain, fast pulse, difficulty in breathing).

There is also a small risk of skin staining if your cannula is not working properly or leaking. This may be permanent.

How is my IV iron given?

A midwife will give you IV iron under the supervision of a doctor. Due to risk of allergic reactions we will advise that you take **Chlorpheniramine 4mg** at least 2 hours before your treatment and you must be under close observation when having IV iron. You will have your pulse and blood pressure checked and your baby's heart rate will be monitored throughout the infusion.

You will have IV iron by single dose infusion into your vein, this takes about an hour. The dose given depends on your blood iron level (haemoglobin) and your weight. The doctor will calculate the dose for you.

What happens after my treatment?

If you were taking iron tablets before your infusion then these can stop as they are not normally needed after having IV iron

Your CMW or GP will review you two to four weeks after you have had your IV iron to check how well you've responded to the treatment and to have a repeat blood test to check your haemoglobin levels.

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