

## IRON INFUSIONS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Why is iron important?*

Our bodies need iron. Iron is used to make haemoglobin - the part of the red blood cells that carries oxygen around our body. It is also important for muscle strength, energy and good mental function. If your iron levels are low this may make you feel tired and impact on your ability to do normal daily activities. As the amount of iron in the body falls even lower, haemoglobin levels drop below normal. This is known as iron deficiency anaemia.

### *Why might I need IV iron?*

The most common way to treat iron deficiency is to increase your iron intake in your diet as well as taking iron by mouth (as a tablet or liquid). This works well for most people and is usually tried first. Other people may need iron to be given straight into the body through a vein. This is called an intravenous (IV) iron infusion. The iron is given through a needle and dripped ("infused") into your veins. Sometimes two iron infusions (given at least one week apart) are needed to fully top up iron stores.

### IV iron might be needed if you:

- Are not able to take iron tablets / liquid.
- Are not responding to iron tablets / liquid or not absorbing them.
- Need to get your iron levels up quickly, for instance before major surgery.
- If you have chronic kidney disease or chronic heart failure.

### *What happens during your appointment?*

Infusion therapy involves the administration of a medication through a needle or cannula. The cannula is usually inserted into a vein in your arm and is then connected to a sterile bag that contains the fluid and the medication to be infused. During your infusion our staff will monitor you.



### *What to bring and what should I wear?*

It is recommended that you wear comfortable loose-fitting clothes. Your sleeve will need to be pushed above the elbow. This will allow our staff to more easily insert the cannula and to monitor your vital signs. As some IV fluids may make you feel cool, it is also suggested that you bring a jacket to keep you warm.

### *Who supplies the Iron infusion itself?*

Your usual general practitioner should supply you with the prescription for the appropriate dose of Ferinject prior to the day of infusion. You should take the prescription to the chemist and bring the box containing Ferinject with you. The chemist may need to order the medication, so please go a few days ahead of time.

### *How do I prepare for the infusion?*

It is important that you are well hydrated prior to your procedure. Please drink plenty of water before your treatment. If you suffer from a heart or kidney condition, please discuss the appropriate amount of hydration with your doctor. Please ensure you eat a normal meal before your infusion.

### *How long will the infusion take?*

Most infusions take less than 30 minutes. For patients having an iron infusion, please allow one hour as there is a 30 minute observation period post infusion.

### *Can I have an iron infusion whilst I'm pregnant?*

Ferinject can be given after the 1st trimester, but guidelines vary. Please consult your doctor on your suitability for an iron infusion.

### *Can children have an iron infusion?*

The minimum age for an iron infusion is 14 years.



*Can I bring a friend with me?*

You are welcome to bring a support person with you. They can remain with you in our treatment room.

*Can I get a medical / attendance certificate?*

Yes - please let the doctor know if this required.

*Are there any side effects with IV iron?*

Generally, when side effects do occur, they are mild and settle down on their own.

The most common side effects are temporary and include:

- Headache, feeling sick (nausea) or vomiting, muscle or joint pains.
- Changes in taste including a metallic taste in the mouth.
- Changes to the blood pressure and pulse.

**Skin staining** (brown discolouration) may occur due to leakage of iron into the tissues around the needle (drip). **This is not common but the stain can be long lasting or even permanent.** Inform the doctor or nurse straight away of any discomfort, burning, redness or swelling at the needle (drip/cannula) site.

Although extremely uncommon, some people may have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis < 1:1,000). In rare cases this can be life threatening. You will be closely monitored while IV iron is given, and for 30 minutes after. Sometimes side effects, including headache, muscle or joint pains can start 1 to 2 days later. They will mostly settle down by themselves over the next couple of days. If they worry you or interfere with your daily activities, contact Royal Park Medical for advice.



Ferinject can lead to hypophosphataemia (low phosphate levels). In most cases this causes no symptoms, but in severe cases people may experience vertigo, nausea, general weakness, tingling in the hands and depression-like symptoms.

*How much does an iron infusion cost?*

Your iron infusion at Royal Park Medical will attract an out of pocket cost of between \$225-\$265 depending on the Medicare rebate that is applicable (time based). This includes all consumables, nursing time and medical management.

The cost of the Ferinject (prescribed iron) is not included in the above fees. Ferinject is available as a PBS subsidised medication. You will pay the PBS price of \$31.60, and much less for concession card holders and those on the safety net.

Please discuss the cost of the infusion with your doctor prior to the consultation.