

Taking Iron Supplements

Barnsley Office: Westgate Plaza One, Westgate, Barnsley, S70 2DR

Patient information

Why are iron supplements needed?

Iron supplements are prescribed to treat and prevent iron deficiency anaemia.

Iron helps the body to make healthy red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body. Some things such as blood loss, pregnancy or too little iron in your diet can make your iron supply drop too low, leading to anaemia.

Symptoms of anaemia can include feeling breathless, tired, pale skin or palpitations (noticeable heartbeats).

How to take iron supplements?

Iron can be prescribed as tablets, capsules or as a liquid that you swallow.

More iron is absorbed if taken on an empty stomach, so it is best to take iron one hour before a meal.

Some medications may affect the absorption of iron so it is always best to check with your GP or pharmacist if any new medications or supplements are suitable to take at the same time.

DO NOT TAKE IRON AT THE SAME TIME AS MILK OR HIGH CALCIUM CONTAINING PRODUCTS AS THESE CAN ALSO REDUCE HOW WELL IRON IS ABSORBED. SEPARATE THESE BY 2 HOURS.



What are the side effects?

Common side effects of iron include:

- ◆ Stomach upset
- ◆ Nausea (feeling sick)
- ◆ Diarrhoea
- ◆ Constipation

These symptoms can improve as your body gets used to the iron supplements, however contact your GP or pharmacist if these symptoms persist as your dose or iron preparation can be adjusted to help with these symptoms.

What happens next?

Most people begin to feel better after taking iron for 2 weeks, but it may take up to 4 weeks to take full effect.

Your GP will request further blood tests monthly to check if the iron is improving on your blood results.

Once your blood results return to normal, the iron supplements will continue for another 3 months. Your GP will inform you when it is safe to stop iron. We will recheck your blood results every 3 months for 1 year to make sure your iron levels stay in range.

References:

NHS.co.uk

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/iron-deficiency-anaemia/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/ferrous-fumarate/>

Oxford University Hospital Patient Guide

<https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/files/11903Piron.pdf>