

# Intravenous Iron Treatments in Pregnancy

Healthy levels of iron in a mother's blood are important for a healthy pregnancy and a safe birth. Low iron in a mother's blood (anemia) can be treated with iron-rich food or iron pills. Sometimes intravenous (IV) iron treatments are needed when very low iron levels (anemia) have not improved with food or iron pills.

## How does iron help me and my unborn baby?

- Supports healthy growth of your baby's brain.
- Helps your baby to store iron in its own body for a good start in life.
- Reduces the chance of your baby arriving too early or having a low birth weight.
- Reduces the need for a blood transfusion during delivery.
- Helps you to have more energy and feel less tired.

## Why should I get intravenous (IV) iron treatments?

IV iron treatments are used when iron rich foods and iron pills have not helped to raise iron levels in the blood. They are given in the second half of pregnancy. IV iron treatments are a fast way to raise iron levels. It may take only a week before you feel any changes in your energy level.

## How will I get my IV iron treatments?

IV iron treatments are given as a day procedure at the hospital. Most women will have 2 infusions per week for a total of 4 treatments. There are usually a few days between each treatment. Each treatment will take about 1 to 3 hours.

## What are the potential side effects that you will be monitored for ?

- |                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Pain at the IV site | • Metallic taste                  |
| • Headache            | • Fast heart rate                 |
| • Nausea              | • Joint pain                      |
| • Low blood pressure  | • Leg cramps                      |
| • Dizziness           | • Severe allergic response – rare |

## How do I get ready for the treatment?

- STOP taking your iron pills during the IV iron treatments. Iron pills will not be well absorbed at this time.
- Drink water just before your appointment. This will make it easier for the nurse to start your IV.

## What should I do after my treatments?

- Get your blood levels checked 2 weeks after your last treatment. Talk with your health care team about the results of your blood test.
- Restart your iron pills **5 days** after your last IV iron treatment. Take them until you reach target iron levels. You may need to continue taking your iron pills after your baby is born for up to 3 - 6 months.
- Take your iron pills with a glass of orange juice or 500 mg of Vitamin C. This helps to absorb the iron.
- Let your health care team know if you are having problems taking your iron pills.
- Talk to your health care provider about foods to eat to increase your iron intake.
- Avoid coffee, tea and cola drinks with your meals. These drinks interfere with iron absorption.

You can also link to further resources at:

[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or call 8.1.1 at any time to speak to a nurse or dietitian

**Keep iron pills out of reach of children to reduce the risk of poisoning.**

## Keep track of the iron levels in your blood

Iron levels are checked at prenatal visits. Record your levels here and bring this record to each of your visits.

Date	Hemoglobin -iron carried in the blood	Ferritin (iron stores in the body)
	<b>Target levels:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1<sup>st</sup> trimester: 110 or higher</li><li>• 2nd trimester: 105 or higher</li><li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester: 110 or higher</li></ul>	<b>Target levels:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 30 or higher in pregnancy</li><li>• 50 or higher after pregnancy</li></ul>

**The information in this handout is intended only for the person it was given to by the health care team. It does not replace the advice or directions given to you by your doctor or midwife.**