



# Iron supplement




## Patient information

AFFIX PATIENT IDENTIFICATION LABEL HERE

UMRN:

Family name:

Given name:

Medicine name	Strength	Example of brand	Dose directions
Iron and vitamin C (tablet)	Ferrous sulfate 325mg Sodium ascorbate 500mg	Ferro-grad C	
Iron (tablet)	Ferrous fumarate 200 mg	Ferro-tab	
Iron (liquid)	Ferrous sulfate 30mg/mL	Ferro-liquid	

## Why do I need to take iron?

Your blood test has shown that you have low iron levels. Iron is important for growth and development in children. It is also needed to make red blood cells. If you have low iron you may also have low red blood cells, which can make you feel tired and weak. This is called iron deficiency anaemia.

Often low iron levels occur because of a lack of iron in the diet. Foods that are rich in iron include meat, leafy green vegetables, beans, and grain products that have extra iron mixed in (eg: brown bread and cereal).

Extra iron is required during periods of growth in children and during pregnancy and low iron is common at these times.

Sometimes low iron can happen because iron is not being absorbed properly or iron is being lost (for example, because of bleeding). Your doctor or nurse practitioner will check if this might be an issue for you and may arrange some more blood tests or other investigations.

Iron supplements (tablets or liquid) will provide extra iron so that your iron stores can be increased quickly, and iron deficiency anaemia can be treated or prevented.

Increasing iron in your diet may also help to prevent your levels from becoming low again in the future.

## How do I take iron?

It is important to take the iron supplement regularly at the dose recommended.

For children, this dose has been calculated based on how low iron levels are and the weight of the child.

Iron is best absorbed on an empty stomach 30 minutes before meals with a glass of water or juice if you are taking tablets. Vitamin C, found in orange juice, can help with the absorption of iron.

Do not take iron tablets with tea, coffee, milk or cola as these can reduce the amount of iron absorbed by the body.

Do not take iron at the same time as calcium tablets as the absorption of iron can be affected by calcium tablets. If you need to take calcium tablets as well, it is recommended that you take iron and calcium tablets at least two hours apart.

Antacids and some other medications can also affect the absorption of iron. Your doctor or nurse will advise you if you are taking these medications and need to space them out.

It is important to keep iron supplements out of the reach of children as taking too much iron can be dangerous for children.

## Are there any side effects?

Some people may experience side effects from taking iron supplements. The side effects often improve as your body gets used to them.

Possible side effects can include:

- Constipation or diarrhoea. Drinking more water and eating food with fibre can help reduce constipation. Your doctor may also give you some medicine to help with constipation if needed.
- Stomach upset, nausea, stomach cramps. If you get stomach upset or nausea you can take the iron with some food or take it at night. Sometimes you may need to take a lower dose that will increase with time. Only your doctor should advise you on changes to your dose or how to take your medicine

Iron may also make your bowel motions (poos) turn black.

Liquid iron can cause staining of the teeth. The risk can be reduced by brushing teeth after taking iron.

Some people cannot tolerate iron tablets because of side effects. Discuss your concerns with your doctor, as in some cases iron can also be given as an injection into the vein (infusion).

More information is available for this medicine in the form of Consumer Medicines Information (CMI). CMIs are available from hospitals, pharmacies and medical practices and from the Therapeutic Goods Administration website ([www.tga.gov.au/consumer-medicines-information-cmi](http://www.tga.gov.au/consumer-medicines-information-cmi)). The CMI contains important information about your medicine and must be read in conjunction with this leaflet.

The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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