

# Intravenous iron therapy for urology patients

**This leaflet explains more about intravenous iron, including the benefits, risks, any alternatives and what you can expect when you come to the clinic. If you have any further questions, please speak to the doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is intravenous iron?

Iron is an essential nutrient that your body needs to make red blood cells, which carry oxygen around your body. If you do not have enough iron, you become anaemic. This can cause tiredness, low energy levels (lethargy/fatigue), low mood, feeling faint and breathlessness. You may also experience taste changes, loss of appetite and feel your heart thumping (palpitations). You may find your sexual function (and libido) is decreased.

Intravenous iron (Ferinject®) is a liquid containing iron that is given through a small tube into a vein in your arm. It is given to treat or prevent iron deficiency (lack of iron) anaemia.

## Why should I have intravenous iron?

Your blood results have shown that the amount of iron in your blood is low. As you are planning to have urological surgery, we would like to make sure that you have enough iron in your body to create new red blood cells as you may lose blood during the operation. You may also be given intravenous iron after your surgery, either while you are still in hospital or as an outpatient.

## What are the risks and side effects?

Like all medicines, Ferinject® may cause side effects.

You may develop headache, nausea (feeling sick), stomach pain or diarrhoea after receiving your iron injection. If this occurs and causes you distress, please phone the Urology Team (details at the end of this leaflet) for advice. The stomach pain/diarrhoea usually settle on their own within a day or two.

Some people notice a metallic taste. This is harmless and does not last very long.

Very rarely, you may experience an allergic reaction. This may happen immediately or may be up to 48 hours after the infusion. If this happens, you may experience some or all of the following symptoms of allergy:

- feeling dizzy
- fast pulse
- feeling light-headed or faint due to a low blood pressure
- swelling in your face
- difficulty in breathing
- chest pain
- itchy skin, a rash or skin redness.

You will be monitored closely during the infusion and for 30 minutes afterwards for any signs of allergy, and you should let us know immediately if you feel unwell. If you do have an allergic reaction, we will stop giving you the iron and treat you immediately with medications to relieve the symptoms.

Very rarely, you may have a delayed allergic reaction when you have left the hospital. If this happens then please contact your GP or NHS 111 or the urology team (contact details below) straight away. If you have any severe signs of allergy, such as facial swelling, difficulty breathing or feeling very unwell, then it is important that you seek immediate medical attention (go to the Emergency Department or dial 999 for an ambulance).

## Are there any alternatives?

If you have a reaction to one type of intravenous iron, we will consider giving you another type. If you do not wish to have iron injections please discuss this with your urology doctor or nurse.

## How can I prepare for having intravenous iron?

If you are an outpatient you will be given an appointment to have the iron infusion in Patience Day Case Unit, 5th Floor Borough Wing, Guy's Hospital.

If you are an inpatient your medical team will arrange for the infusion to be given by the nursing team on your ward.

Tell your nurse if you have signs of an infection such as a raised temperature or feeling unwell, as we may need to reschedule your infusion.

If you are taking iron tablets you should stop taking them on the day of the iron infusion and restart them five days later.

## What happens during the treatment?

Before the iron infusion we will take and record your blood pressure and pulse. If you are well, you will then be given your iron infusion. If you are having your iron infusion on the Day Case Unit, you should expect to be with us for about two hours.

## Will I feel any pain?

You may feel a slight sting when we insert the needle to give the infusion. You should feel no pain when we give the iron.

## What happens afterwards?

After the infusion we will recheck your blood pressure and pulse. If these readings are within your normal range we will ask you to remain in the unit for 30 minutes. This is to make sure you do not have a delayed reaction to the iron. You should be aware of the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction as described above and look out for them every time you have intravenous iron, and for 30 minutes afterwards. If you are still feeling well after this time you will be able to go home. You should be aware that allergic reactions can happen up to 48 hours after the infusion. If you notice any reactions you should follow the advice given above.

## What do I need to do after I go home?

You should look out for signs of delayed allergic reaction, and take the correct action as described above.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

If you are going to be having an operation, your consultant will see you during your admission on the ward. If you have already had an operation you will be followed-up at your next scheduled clinic appointment. Depending on your blood test result you may need further iron infusions.

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about having an iron infusion, please contact the Urology Team, **t:** 020 7188 7823, Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm (excluding bank holidays). Outside these hours, please contact Aston Key Ward, **t:** 020 7188 8860.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

### Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)  
**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111      **w:** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)

### NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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