

Iron infusion Benefits

An iron infusion is a way to increase the body's iron levels quickly. It's a more immediate treatment than supplements or dietary changes. This can be very helpful in situations where anemia is severe.

The physical benefits of an iron infusion include increased energy and easier breathing. You should start feeling these benefits a few weeks after your final infusion treatment. How long these benefits last depends on the cause of your iron deficiency anemia and whether or not you're using any other therapies to increase your iron levels.

For example, regular blood loss, such as through menstruation, may lead to a chronic drop in iron levels. Depending on your situation, the benefits of an iron infusion may last anywhere from several months to a few years.

Overview

Iron infusion is a procedure in which iron is delivered to your body intravenously, meaning into a vein through a needle. This method of delivering medication or supplementation is also known as an intravenous (IV) infusion.

Iron infusions are usually prescribed by doctors to treat iron deficiency anemia. Iron deficiency anemia is typically treated with dietary changes and iron supplements that you take in pill form. In some cases, though, doctors may recommend iron infusions instead.

How to prepare for an iron infusion

Your doctor will give you specific instructions for preparing for your first iron infusion treatment. Some basic things you can do to prepare on the day of your infusion include:

- eat your breakfast and lunch, as there is no need to fast for an iron infusion
- take your regular medications
- be prepared to have a small IV drip put in your arm or hand
- know how to call for help during your infusion in case you have an adverse reaction

You may feel nervous about your iron infusion. You can help reduce any anxieties by talking about the procedure with your doctor first. They can recommend ways to help you stay comfortable and relaxed during the procedure.

Tips for comfort

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.
- Have drinking water available.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a film or TV show on a tablet or smartphone.
- Read a book or magazine.

What happens during an iron infusion

An iron infusion usually takes place at a hospital or hemodialysis center. A doctor or other healthcare provider, such as a nurse, will use a needle to insert a small tube into a vein. This small tube is known as a catheter. It's usually put into a vein in your arm or hand. Then, the healthcare provider will remove the needle, leaving the catheter in your vein.

The catheter is attached to a long tube, which is connected to an IV bag of the iron. The iron has been diluted with a saline solution. This solution is either pumped into your vein or uses gravity to slowly drip down the tube and into your vein.

You may feel a slight pinch in your skin where the IV needle is inserted. There may also be some pressure at the insertion site during the procedure.

The doctor performing the procedure will give you a test dose first to ensure you don't have any adverse reactions from the iron. If you do, they will stop the procedure.

How long does an iron infusion take?

An iron infusion can take up to 3 or 4 hours. You should expect to remain seated for this time. In some cases, the infusion may take a little longer, depending on the level of treatment your doctor thinks you need. The slow infusion rate helps prevent complications.

It often takes several iron infusions to bring the body's iron levels up to the appropriate levels. You will receive iron infusions over the course of one or a few weeks for your treatments. Iron infusions take time and can be more expensive than other types of anemia treatments.

Side effects and complications

After the infusion, you can return to your normal activities straight away. Most people are able to drive themselves home. You can even go back to work after your infusion if you feel up to it.

You may have some side effects right after the procedure. Most of them are mild. These include:

- temporary changes in the way you taste food and drinks
- headaches
- nausea and vomiting
- muscle and joint pain
- shortness of breath
- itchiness and rash
- increased or decreased blood pressure or heart rate
- burning sensation or swelling at the site of the injection

Serious side effects

A rare but serious complication from iron infusions is iron toxicity. The symptoms of iron toxicity may come on quickly, which can cause anaphylactic shock. Or they may come on slowly over time. Iron toxicity that develops over time leads to too much iron in the body's tissues.

The test dose and the slow infusion rate are both done to prevent this complication. The test dose is also important if you have a history of multiple drug allergies. Your doctor will use the test dose to monitor you for any reactions. These reactions can include:

- anaphylaxis
- shock
- severe hypotension (low blood pressure)
- collapse
- loss of consciousness

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When may iron supplements be helpful

Iron supplements can help reverse low iron levels or treat iron deficiency anemia. They can produce results quicker than diet interventions and are often considered the treatment method of choice.

These supplements can be particularly helpful among people who are prone to low iron levels, especially if they're unable to maintain a good iron status through diet alone, including

- pregnant people
- infants and young children
- people experiencing heavy periods
- frequent blood donors
- people with cancer
- people with gastrointestinal disorders, such as celiac disease, ulcerative colitis, or Crohn's disease
- those who have undergone gastric surgery
- people with heart failure
- those taking iron-depleting medications, such as those used to reduce stomach acid
- people regularly partaking in heavy exercise
- those following a vegetarian or vegan diet

- people with blood disorders, such as thalassemia or sickle cell anemia
- people with alcoholism