

# IRON SUPPLEMENTS



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
SINGAPORE



## ABOUT your medicine

Iron is a mineral that the body needs to produce red blood cells. When the body does not get enough iron, a condition called iron-deficiency anaemia will develop. This condition is associated with excessive tiredness and weakness as there are insufficient red blood cells to transport oxygen throughout the body. Oxygen is needed to produce energy. Iron-containing supplements are thus useful for the prevention or treatment of iron-deficiency anaemias.

## HOW should I take the medicine?

Your doctor will determine the amount of medicine you should take based on the severity of your condition. Take this medicine in the dose prescribed by your doctor.

Iron supplements may be given either orally or by injection into the muscle or vein.

The supplements may be taken once or more often during the day depending on how low your iron store is. Your doctor may be using blood tests to monitor your iron load and response to treatment. Keep all appointments for blood tests and regular visits.

Iron is best taken on an empty stomach, 1 hour before or 2 hours after food. If gastric upset is experienced, it may be taken with food to minimise the upset. However, iron should not be taken together with milk or antacids as they reduce the absorption of iron.

Iron supplements may colour your stools black, but you need not stop taking them.

## What should I do if I FORGET a dose?

If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, take it as soon as you can. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, wait until then to take the medicine and skip the missed dose. Do not double your dose or take extra medicine to make up for a missed dose. If you have missed several doses, please call your physician to check what you should do.

## What are the possible SIDE-EFFECTS of the medicine?

Most side-effects of taking iron are mild and may not need discontinuation of the supplement unless severe. The following are the possible side-effects:

- dark tarry hard stools
- gastrointestinal upset
- metallic taste, nausea, vomiting
- headaches
- muscle pain
- constipation or diarrhoea

Taking too much iron may be associated with the following. Consult your doctor immediately if any of the following occurs:

- severe gastrointestinal irritation / pain
- confusion and excessive tiredness
- palpitations
- vomiting or coughing of blood

## What PRECAUTIONS should I take?

Inform your doctor if you have any of the following conditions before proceeding with iron supplements:

- Haemochromatosis (high iron in the body)
- Thalassaemia
- Allergy to other iron products

Iron administration by injection may be associated with some reactions. Please inform your doctor should you experience any of the following during or shortly after (24 to 48 hours) an injection or infusion of iron:

- Breathlessness
- Light-headedness
- Flushing
- Sweating
- Muscle ache

Do inform your doctor and pharmacist if you are already taking some other medicines, herbal preparations, nutritional products or vitamin supplements.

You must tell your doctor if you are allergic to any other medicines or if you develop an allergy while taking this medicine. The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following: swollen face/eyes/lips, difficulty in breathing or widespread itchy skin rashes.

Inform your doctor if you are breast-feeding, pregnant or likely to become pregnant during the course of this treatment

## How should I STORE the medicine?

Store the medicine in a dry place at room temperature, away from heat and direct light. Do not refrigerate your medicines unless instructed to do so.