

## Iron Infusions – Information for Patients.

An iron infusion is a minor procedure when an iron containing medicine is infused directly into the blood circulation. The iron containing preparation circulates and is delivered to the body organs that require iron for normal functioning. Ferric carboxymaltose (FCM) also known as FERINJECT® is an intravenous (IV) iron preparation, a medicine that is used in the treatment of iron deficiency conditions such as iron-deficiency anaemia (IDA). It contains iron in the form of ferric carboxymaltose, an iron carbohydrate compound. Iron is an essential element required for the oxygen-carrying capacity of haemoglobin in red blood cells and of myoglobin in muscle tissue. Moreover, iron plays an important role in many other vital processes in the human body. In particular, Ferric carboxymaltose (FCM) is an iron preparation that has characteristics that allow larger single doses to be administered over a shorter infusion period compared with previously used IV iron preparations.

### When is an iron infusion recommended?

Iron deficiency is a common cause of anaemia. In Australia current clinical management recommends use of oral iron (in appropriate doses and for sufficient duration) as first-line therapy for most patients presenting with iron-deficiency anaemia (IDA). An iron infusion is sometimes recommended for people who are low in iron (iron deficient). Usually iron can be given orally but sometimes patients experience side-effects from oral iron (stomach upsets, constipation) or there are situations when oral iron is ineffective or cannot be used, and an iron infusion may be recommended. If the body iron is particularly low an iron infusion may be recommended to increase the iron stores quickly. The aim of the iron infusion therapy is to replenish body iron stores and to remedy anaemia, a reduced level of haemoglobin due to iron deficiency.

### Are iron infusions safe?

It is generally recommended that iron therapy initially be given orally. Iron infusions are however considered safe particularly with the newer iron containing preparations currently available. In the past (older) iron infusions were associated with common side-effects including allergic type reactions. This is much less common with the current iron containing preparation (Ferric carboxymaltose; FCM also known as FERINJECT®) but this is still a potential risk. There is also a risk of skin staining should the cannula leak. This staining may be permanent. Your doctor will talk to you about the risks and the benefits of having an iron infusion in your particular circumstances.

### What are the side-effects of an iron infusion with FCM?

It is unusual to experience any significant side-effects from an iron infusion with the newer iron containing medications. Some patients may experience a headache or feel nauseated. Less commonly some patients experience flushing, a disturbance in taste, itchiness, fever and chills. Please see the full list of side-effects of iron infusions (Ferinject) given to you by your doctor or nurse.

### What do I need to do on the day of the iron infusion?

There is no particular preparation needed for the iron infusion. It is helpful if you have had plenty of fluids to drink so finding a vein for the infusion can be easier. You will be able to drive home after the iron infusion.

### How long does the iron infusion take?

The infusion usually only takes 15 – 20 minutes once the IV drip infusion is commenced.

### Is there anything I need to do after the iron infusion?

It's always important to monitor your own health after an iron infusion. If you experience any significant symptoms (for example chest pain or difficulty breathing) it will be important for you to contact your doctor who administered the iron infusion or an emergency department as soon as possible.

### Resources used to produce this information sheet.

- Diagnosis and management of iron deficiency anaemia: a clinical update:  
<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2010/193/9/diagnosis-and-management-iron-deficiency-anaemia-clinical-update>
- <http://www.nps.org.au/medicines/hormonal-and-metabolic-system/red-blood-cell-production-medicines/ferric-carboxymaltose/ferinject-solution-for-injection>
- <http://www.nps.org.au/publications/health-professional/nps-radar/2014/august-2014/ferric-carboxymaltose>