

Your child's intravenous iron therapy

What is iron?

Iron is a mineral that is part of hemoglobin which carries oxygen in blood. Iron helps produce red blood cells.

If your child's iron is low they will have a low red blood cell count. This is called anemia. As a result, their blood carries less oxygen to the cells in their body. This can make them feel weak, tired and look pale.

Who should receive intravenous (IV) iron therapy?

Your child should receive IV iron therapy if they cannot tolerate or absorb oral iron, or if they have severe iron deficiency anemia. This means:

- Low red blood cells – hemoglobin level less than 110 g/L (grams per litre).
 - Low iron level – ferritin under 30 µg/L (micrograms per litre), or under 200 µg/L with iron saturation less than 20%.
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What are the side effects of IV iron?

Common side effects include low blood pressure (dizziness), muscle cramps, joint pain, headache, injection site swelling, chest discomfort, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea. This happens in about 1 in 20 patients. Serious allergic reactions are rare and include rashes, face swelling and wheezing.

After receiving the IV iron therapy, your child may be monitored for 30 minutes to make sure they do not have an allergic reaction or a drop in blood pressure.

If your child has any serious reactions after leaving the clinic, go to the Emergency Department at McMaster Children's Hospital right away.

If you live outside Hamilton, go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Why does oral iron in pill form not work as well as IV iron?

Some people may have side effects from oral iron pills, or have difficulty absorbing oral iron. It can also take many months of oral pills to reach the same dose as what can be given in a single IV infusion.

How much IV iron therapy does my child need?

This depends on the degree of iron deficiency anemia and which IV iron product is prescribed. Your child does not need to take their oral iron pills on the day they receive the IV iron.

Which forms of IV iron will be offered to my child?

Two forms of IV iron are supplied by our pharmacy:

- iron sucrose (Venofer®), and
- iron dextran (DexIron®).

Your doctor will discuss the right one to treat your child's anemia.

How will I pay for my child's IV iron therapy?

There are 3 different options you may use to pay for your child's IV iron therapy.

Option 1: Private Insurance

Your private insurance provider may cover the cost of your child's IV iron therapy through your insurance plan. You may need to provide the drug identification number listed here:

IV Iron Drug Identification Numbers	
02243716	Venofer®
02205963	DexIron®

The approximate cost of the above listed drugs is 50 cents for each mg.

Option 2: Exceptional Access Coverage (EAP)

If you are covered for medications under a government program, you will be eligible for this drug through the exceptional access program.

As of January 1, 2018, your child under the age of 25 will be eligible for exceptional access as part of their OHIP+ coverage.

Our Drug Access Facilitator will submit this request on your doctor's behalf and if needed, can help you apply to the Trillium Drug Program.

Option 3: Special Considerations

If you do not have private or EAP coverage and are unable to pay for your child's IV iron therapy on your own, our Drug Access Facilitator will work with you to understand your case and discuss other options to afford your child's drugs.

Contact our Drug Access Facilitator at 905-521-2100, ext. 64223 to help you with this process and to review your options.

Where do I pick up my child's dose of IV iron?

Your child's dose of IV iron will be ready for you to pick up at the hospital pharmacy where your child will have their infusion appointment. You will need to bring it with you to their appointment.

The three Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) pharmacies providing this service are listed below:

- **McMaster Drugstore: 905-521-5019**
 - Located in the main lobby of McMaster University Medical Centre near the information kiosk, across from Admitting.
 - Hours: Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (except on holidays)
- **Hamilton General Drugstore: 905-577-8259**
 - Located in the main lobby of the Hamilton General Hospital near the information kiosk, across from Admitting.
 - Hours: Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (except on holidays)
- **Juravinski Cancer Centre Pharmacy: 905-575-6320**
 - Located on the second floor of the Juravinski Cancer Centre, across from the Supportive Care reception.
 - Hours: Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm (except on holidays)

Go to the pharmacy 30 minutes before your child's infusion appointment to pick up your child's dose of IV iron. Bring it with you to their appointment.

What if my child is scheduled for another infusion and needs more IV iron?

At least 24 hours before your child's infusion appointment, call the hospital where you picked up your child's original supply and ask for a refill. Pick it up 30 minutes before your child's appointment to bring it with you.

If you have any other questions or concerns, speak with your doctor or contact the Drug Access Facilitator at 905-521-2100, ext. 64223 for more information.