

Medication: Iron

Ferrous fumarate 300 mg (100 mg elemental iron)
or ferrous gluconate 300 mg (35 mg elemental iron)
or ferrous sulfate 300 mg (60 mg elemental iron)
Oral polysaccharide iron complex (e.g., Feramax)
Oral heme iron polypeptide (e.g., Proferrin, Jamp-Iron Polypeptide);

What are iron supplements?

Iron supplements are used to treat or prevent low iron in the body. Iron deficiency may present with symptoms such as fatigue, hair loss, and dry skin. You don't have to be anemic (low hemoglobin) to benefit from iron when your levels are low.

Heme iron polypeptide is an alternative to elemental iron formulations (such as ferrous fumarate or gluconate). It is typically from animal heme (often bovine or other ungulate), and therefore may not be a good option for those individuals with a vegetarian or vegan diet. Experience has shown that heme iron is better tolerated with respect to gastrointestinal symptoms; however, it is considerably more expensive than elemental formulations.

Expected Benefit:

- It may take months to notice a benefit

Watch for possible side effects:

It is important to be aware of the side effects however, it is also important to remember that not all side effects occur in everyone. Many of the less serious side effects will improve over the first few days of taking the medication.

If you have problems with these side effects talk with your doctor or pharmacist:

- Constipation (contact the clinic if you develop constipation)
- Stomach upset
- Nausea

You may notice that your stool is darker or black while taking iron. This is expected.

Stopping the medication:

Please talk with your doctor before stopping this medication.

How to use this medication:

- Take **every second day** (or *Mon, Wed, Fri*) with vitamin C or orange juice (or other acidic juice) on empty stomach. Every second day dosing paradoxically increases iron absorption!
- If you experience upset stomach then you can take it with a small amount of food or at bedtime.
- **Do not take at the same time** as milk or milk products.

Dosing Schedule:

- Available without prescription. Ask your pharmacist for help in selecting the correct iron.
- Take one of the following:
 - Ferrous fumarate 300 mg (100 mg elemental) **every second day**
 - Ferrous sulfate 300 mg (~60 mg elemental) **every second day**
 - Ferrous gluconate 300 mg (~30 mg elemental) **every second day**
- The higher the elemental content of the tablet, the harder it is on your stomach. If you have stomach upset with ferrous fumarate, stepdown to ferrous sulfate or ferrous gluconate. It will take longer to replace iron stores with the lower doses.
 - Cut tablets in quarters and take $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tab
 - Increase by $\frac{1}{4}$ tab as tolerated
 - It is better to take a small portion of iron than none at all
 - Consider heme iron polypeptide as an alternative to elemental iron if you have significant constipation

Drugs and Foods Interactions:

Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medication, including non-prescription medication (over-the-counter medication) and herbal products.

- Take 2 hours before, or 4 hours after antacids, calcium, and other acid suppressing medications (e.g. ranitidine, omeprazole)
- Avoid raspberry leaf

Please contact the Complex Chronic Diseases Program if you have further questions about your medications.