



Low iron is common — and very treatable.

Iron helps your blood carry oxygen. When stores run low you can feel exhausted and foggy — often before a blood test even calls it 'anaemia'.



IRON STORES LOW



1 in 5

women of reproductive age are iron deficient



Commonest

nutritional deficiency in the world



Ferritin

the blood test that shows your iron stores

Signs your iron may be low



Tiredness & weakness

Feeling drained, flat or short on stamina — often the very first sign.



Breathless, racing heart

Puffed on the stairs, or a pounding heart, as your blood carries less oxygen.



Pale skin & dizziness

A pale complexion, lightheadedness, headaches or feeling faint.



Brain fog & poor focus

Trouble concentrating, remembering, or thinking as clearly as usual.



Hair, nails & skin

More hair shedding, brittle or spoon-shaped nails, and dry skin.



Restless legs & cravings

Fidgety legs at night, or craving ice or non-foods (this is called pica).

Normal blood count — but still low iron?

You can have low iron stores and feel unwell before your blood count ever turns to 'anaemia'. That is why we check **ferritin** (your iron stores) — and look for the cause, such as heavy periods, diet, pregnancy, or the gut.



Iron-rich foods



Best absorbed (animal)

Red meat, chicken, fish and eggs. This 'haem' iron is the easiest for your body to absorb.



Plant sources

Lentils, beans, tofu, dark leafy greens, fortified cereals, nuts, seeds and dried apricots.



Boost absorption

Add vitamin C to meals — citrus, capsicum, tomato or kiwi — to absorb more iron.



Keep these apart

Tea, coffee, milk & other calcium, and antacids block iron — have them between meals.

Getting the most from iron tablets



Take them well

- ✓ Take exactly as prescribed — every-other-day dosing often absorbs just as well with fewer side effects
- ✓ Swallow with water or a vitamin-C drink — not tea, coffee or milk
- ✓ Keep going for about 3 months after your levels recover, to refill the stores
- ✓ Black stools are expected and harmless



Possible side effects

- Constipation (the most common)
- Nausea or tummy upset
- Cramping or diarrhoea
- A metallic taste
- **If they bother you:** take with a little food, or ask about alternate-day dosing or a gentler formula — don't just stop

Will food alone fix it?

Diet matters, but food alone usually can't correct an established deficiency quickly. It works best **alongside** tablets or an infusion — and then to help keep your iron topped up afterwards.




When an infusion is offered



Tablets don't suit you
Side effects make iron tablets too hard to keep taking.



Tablets aren't working
Your levels don't rise, or your gut isn't absorbing the iron.




Iron is needed sooner
Very low stores, ongoing blood loss, or before surgery or later in pregnancy.




Absorption is the problem
Conditions like coeliac disease, IBD, or after weight-loss (bariatric) surgery.


What happens on the day




1 Check & consent
A quick review; we explain the small risks




2 Cannula in
A small tube goes into a vein in your arm



3 The drip
Iron in saline runs in — often 15–30 min




4 We watch over you
Monitored during, and ~30 min afterwards



Usually mild & temporary

- ✔ Headache, nausea or dizziness
- ✔ A metallic taste during the drip
- ✔ Aches or a flu-like feeling for a day or two (can start a few days later)
- ✔ A temporary drop in phosphate — tell us about bone or muscle aches



Tell staff straight away

- Stinging, pain or swelling at the drip site — leaking can leave a lasting brown skin stain
- Flushing, chest tightness or trouble breathing
- Rash, itching, or swelling of the lips or face
- **A serious allergic reaction is very rare** — this is why we monitor you

Low iron is fixable

Find the cause → top up the stores → then keep them topped up.

If iron tablets don't suit you, there are other options — just ask. — Dr Regu