A Patient’s Guide to Venofer®

We are giving you Venofer® to help your body make more red blood cells. This helps increase the amount of oxygen in your body and reduce your need for a blood transfusion.

What is Venofer®?
Venofer® is a form of liquid iron that we give you through your vein (intravenous or IV). Venofer® works quicker than iron by mouth. It also does not irritate your stomach or cause constipation.

Why do I need Venofer®?
We often treat patients with Venofer® if they have low iron levels. Low iron levels may cause symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, irritability and fatigue.

If you continue to have low iron levels, you may develop anemia.

We use Venofer® if:
• Your iron level is so low that iron supplements by mouth will not work
• There is not enough time to build iron stores in your body (for example, before major surgery), or
• Your body is unable to absorb iron.

Why is my iron low?
There are many causes for low iron, including:
• Diet
• Bleeding
• Medicine
• Kidney problems
• Cancer treatment
• Recent surgery
• Digestive problems (such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Celiac Disease, gastric bypass)
• Frequent blood donation.

What do you need to know about me before I receive Venofer®?
Before we give you Venofer®, we will ask if you:
• Have had any allergic reactions to intravenous (IV) iron in the past.
• Have any food or drug allergies. If you have a known allergy, we suggest you wear your MedicAlert® bracelet while in hospital.
• Are currently taking any medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals).
• Are pregnant.
• Are breastfeeding.

Where do I go for my Venofer® treatment?
We will give you Venofer® in the Medical Day Care Clinic at Humber River Hospital. The treatment takes about 2 hours from the time we start the intravenous (IV). You will be in a chair or on a stretcher and will be able to read a book. You should be able to go home unescorted after your treatment.

How many treatments of Venofer® will I need?
You may need 1 to 3 Venofer® treatments. We will schedule each treatment 3 to 7 days apart.
Will I need any laboratory (lab) tests during this treatment?

Your doctor may order lab work during your treatment to determine if the treatment is working, or if you need additional treatment.

What are the side effects of Venofer®?

It is rare to have side effects from Venofer®. Some side effects include low blood pressure, dizziness, chest discomfort, nausea (feel like throwing up), vomiting (throwing up), diarrhea (loose, runny poo), or swelling at the injection site.

You may also have “flu-like symptoms” (such as headache, fatigue, muscle aches, or a low-grade fever). If these symptoms occur, you can treat them with over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicines (such as Tylenol®, Aspirin®, Ibuprofen®). For future treatments, you can try to prevent these symptoms from occurring by taking the same OTC medicine one hour before your next Venofer® treatment.

How do I obtain Venofer®?

Many pharmacies in the community do not carry intravenous medicines. The best option is to buy Venofer® from the hospital’s Rexall™ pharmacy. Your doctor will write a prescription and can fax it to Rexall™ for you.

If you prefer, you may take the prescription and meet the Patient Blood Management Coordinator at Rexall™. The Coordinator can also drop it off at Rexall™ for you.

Please bring the medicine with you to each appointment.

If you pick up your medicine from Rexall™ a few days before your treatment, store it at room temperature. If you plan to pick up your medicine on the day of your treatment, please go to Rexall™ at least 30 minutes before your appointment time.

Do I need to pay for Venofer®?

The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) does not cover intravenous iron so you must pay for Venofer®. At Rexall™, the cost of Venofer® is $150 for a dose of 300 mg (which includes the dispensing fee).

The Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program also does not cover intravenous iron. If you are part of this program, you can try applying for coverage through the “Exceptional Access Program”.

If you have an insurance/benefits company, ask your provider if your plan covers Venofer®. If it does, show your insurance company’s drug card to the pharmacy when dropping off your prescription.

Tell your doctor if the OTC pain medicines do not relieve your flu-like symptoms.

During your treatment, tell your doctor, or the person giving you the Venofer®, right away, if you:

- Have trouble breathing
- Feel light-headed
- Have nausea
- Have hives
- Feel itchy
- Have a rash
- Have swelling of your throat, face, mouth, tongue, legs or hands.

For more information, please contact:

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