Medical Daycare

Intravenous (IV) Iron Treatment
Information for Non-Dialysis Patients

Why is iron important?
Iron is an essential mineral. Your body needs it to make hemoglobin, the part of the red blood cells that carry oxygen. Your body also needs iron to make red blood cells. If you have very low iron levels, you may develop a low red blood cell count. This condition is called iron deficiency anemia.

What causes low iron levels?
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.

How do you treat iron deficiency anemia?
We can treat patients with either a pill form of iron that you take by mouth (oral) or a liquid form of iron that we give through your vein (intravenous or IV).

Between the two treatments, IV iron may be the better option. Some patients may have side effects when taking the iron pill. Your body may not absorb the pill as well as the IV iron. It can also take months of treatment with iron pills to get the same dose as a single treatment of IV iron.

IV iron is for patients who cannot tolerate or absorb iron pills or who have severe iron deficiency anemia.

Which IV iron will I receive?
The IV iron is called Iron Sucrose. It is available under the brand name Venofer®.

What are the side effects of IV iron?
It is rare to have side effects from IV iron.

Some mild side effects include:
• Low blood pressure
• Dizziness
• Chest discomfort
• Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, fatigue, muscle aches, or a low-grade fever
• Nausea (feel like throwing up)
• Vomiting (throwing up)
• Diarrhea (loose, runny poo), or
• Swelling at the injection site.

A serious side effect may be an allergic reaction to the IV iron. We will watch you for signs of an allergic reaction or a decrease of blood pressure during, and for 30 minutes after, your treatment.

During your treatment, tell your nurse right away, if you:
• Have trouble breathing
• Feel itchy
• Have a rash
• Have swelling of your throat, face, mouth, tongue, legs or hands.

If any of these serious reactions happen after leaving the clinic, call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest emergency department right away.

To prevent dizziness, make sure to drink a lot of fluids after the treatment. If you have flu-like symptoms, you can treat them with over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicines (such as Tylenol®,

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Aspirin®, Ibuprofen®).

For future treatments, your doctor may suggest taking the same OTC pain medicine and/or an anti-histamine (such as Benadryl®) an hour before each IV iron treatment to prevent or reduce some of the side effects listed.

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

How much IV iron do I need?
Every patient is different. You may need 1 to 3 doses. We will schedule each treatment 1 week apart or longer, depending on your degree of iron deficiency.

How do I obtain IV iron?
Many pharmacies in the community do not carry intravenous medicines. The best option is to get Venofer® from the hospital’s Rexall™ pharmacy or a Pharmcare IDA™. Your doctor will write a prescription and can fax it to either of those pharmacies for you.

If you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy:
• A few days before your treatment, store it at room temperature.
• On the day of your treatment, please go to the pharmacy at least 20 minutes before your appointment time.

Do I need to pay for IV iron?
In most cases, you must pay for the IV iron. Intravenous medicines are NOT covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) or the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Program.

THE COST OF VENOFER® DEPENDS ON THE DOSAGE YOU NEED.
• If you are part of the ODB 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.

How long can I expect to be at the clinic for on the day of my treatment?
Your clinic appointment may be between 2 to 3 hours depending on your dose.

Can I have an MRI after my Venofer® treatment?
Yes. Venofer® does not affect MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).

For more information, please contact:
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PLEASE BRING THE MEDICINE WITH YOU TO EACH CLINIC APPOINTMENT.

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