

# IRON DEFICIENCY & ME

Iron is a crucial nutrient for growth and development. Iron helps to produce red blood cells that carry oxygen to important places like your brain, heart and muscles! If your iron and red blood cells are low, a healthcare provider may tell you that you have iron deficiency and/or iron deficiency anemia.



**IRON DEFICIENCY = LOW IRON LEVELS**

**IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA = LOW IRON LEVELS & LOW RED BLOOD CELL LEVELS**

## HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE IRON DEFICIENCY?

If you have iron deficiency and/or iron deficiency anemia, you may experience any of the following symptoms:



**SHORTNESS OF BREATH**



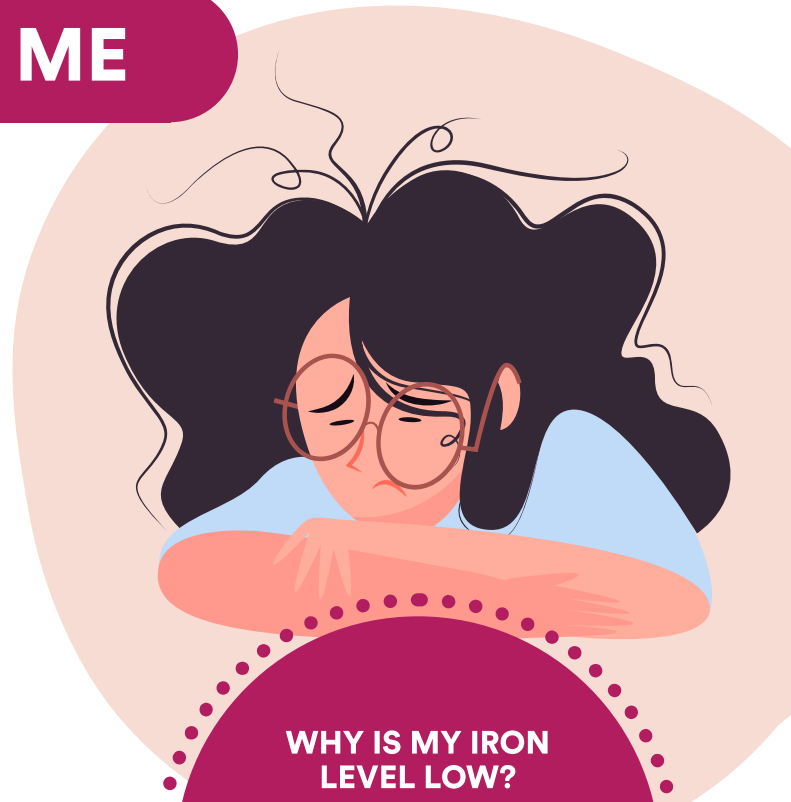
**DIZZINESS**



**HEADACHE**



**PALE SKIN & COLD HANDS OR FEET**



## WHY IS MY IRON LEVEL LOW?

Sometimes people do not get enough iron through the food they eat or may lose blood by bleeding (for example nosebleeds, heavy periods). This can make you feel like you have no energy.



If you have your period, it would be a good idea to track how heavy they are. An easy way to do this is by using a free app called **WeThrive**.

If you have a bleeding disorder, you may be more likely to have iron deficiency and/or iron deficiency anemia because of your bleeding episodes/symptoms.

## WHAT FOODS CAN I EAT TO HELP PREVENT OR MINIMIZE THE RISK OF HAVING IRON DEFICIENCY?

Some foods are easier for your body to absorb the iron from and some are a little harder. There are heme-bound (easy to absorb) and non-heme bound (not easy to absorb) foods.

## WILL I NEED TO TAKE MEDICATION?

Sometimes your healthcare team will suggest that you take an over the counter iron supplement for another iron source - maybe the iron-rich foods were just not enough.

Here are some names of iron supplements that are routinely recommended:

- Ferrous sulfate
- Ferrous fumarate
- Ferrous gluconate

Oral iron (an iron supplement – available in liquid or pill form) is taken by mouth daily and you should start to feel better in about one month of consistently taking it. However, there could be a chance you need intravenous (IV) iron. Your healthcare team will talk about iron supplements and the importance of the elemental iron component; this describes the amount of iron in the supplements that is easily absorbed.

Iron supplements can cause constipation, so drink plenty of water. They can also cause several other side effects, these may include: heartburn, loss of appetite, stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea and darker stool. These side effects are usually temporary.



★ FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU ARE TAKING A 300MG TABLET OF FERROUS FUMARATE, THERE IS 100MG OF ELEMENTAL IRON.

It is recommend you take your iron supplement with some vitamin C (vitamin or glass of orange juice), and not within 2 hours of your meals or dairy products like milk. Milk and other foods can stop your body from absorbing the iron fully. ★

## WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

You don't have to wait for your next scheduled appointment to let your healthcare team know you are not feeling well. Talk to your healthcare team and tell them if you are feeling any of the symptoms of iron deficiency and/or iron deficiency anemia.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

HTC: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_



Canadian Association of  
Nurses in Hemophilia Care  
Ontario Region

## RESOURCES

Anemia | [teens.aboutkidshealth.ca](https://teens.aboutkidshealth.ca)

Iron: *Guidelines to improve your child's intake* | [aboutkidshealth.ca](https://aboutkidshealth.ca)

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