

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Iron Therapy

What is ferritin?

Ferritin is a measure of your iron stores and is measured with a blood test. In people with restless legs syndrome (RLS), a ferritin level lower than 50 mcg/L may be associated with worsening symptoms.

What medicine improves low ferritin?

You have been diagnosed with low ferritin, so we recommend that you take an iron supplement. Here are two recommended iron preparations that are available without a prescription:

Ferrous sulfate 325mg (65 mg elemental iron)

- Take 1 tablet twice per day.
- Note: The bottle may list elemental iron content and/or ferrous sulfate dosing. 325 mg of ferrous sulfate = 65mg elemental iron.
- This is available at your local pharmacy.

NovaFerrum 125

- Take 1 teaspoon or 5 ml liquid once daily.
- This is available at www.novaferrum.com or some local pharmacies.

When taking iron supplements:

- Try to take the medication on an empty stomach with juice or a 250mg vitamin C tablet (vitamin C helps your body better absorb the iron).
- If you get an upset stomach (or other side effects listed below), try taking it with food, or change to the NovaFerrum liquid form listed above.
- Avoid taking calcium supplements or eating calcium rich foods at the same time as you take your iron.

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Possible side effects from iron:

- Upset stomach
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Constipation (taking an over-the-counter stool softener can help)
- Dark colored stools

If these side effects are severe, please call your health care provider.

You may not notice immediate relief of your restless legs symptoms when you start taking iron as it takes time to replenish your body's iron stores. Your doctor will usually recheck your ferritin level once you have been on iron supplements for 2-3 months. Once your ferritin level is at an appropriate level, your doctor may instruct you to stop taking iron. Do not continue taking iron for long periods of time unless instructed to do so by your health care provider, as too much iron may be harmful.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of LUNG LINE® (1-800-222-LUNG). It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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