



PATIENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

We want people to get iron-informed!

To understand why iron is so important to our bodies and what can happen if we're not getting enough, by recognizing the symptoms and taking action. By informing people about the importance of healthy iron levels, we will encourage more people to speak to their healthcare providers about iron deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia. Look out for common symptoms and remember to **listen to your body**.

The importance of iron and iron deficiency

This discussion guide is designed to help you talk to your doctor about your symptoms and any primary conditions that can co-exist with iron deficiency. Without enough iron, the human body cannot work properly. Iron is required throughout the body. It is essential for the production of red blood cells and ensuring that the heart and skeletal muscles can function effectively.¹ Iron also plays a vital role in fighting off infections and illness,² maintaining energy levels² and normal brain function. Iron deficiency means that there is not enough iron available in the body to enable it to function properly.³

Iron deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia

Iron deficiency anaemia occurs when the level of iron stored in the body is so low, the body can no longer make enough haemoglobin needed to develop healthy red blood cells.⁴ Haemoglobin is the protein found inside red blood cells that carries oxygen to tissues and organs throughout the body, which is essential for them to function properly.⁵

Keeping track of and sharing any symptoms with your doctor is key to managing your overall health and assessing all possibilities for why you may feel the way you do.

Talk to your doctor

Clarify your symptoms and the frequency of their occurrence to your treating physician in order for them to make an informed diagnosis.



1.
Do you find yourself feeling more tired lately?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

2.
Have you noticed brittle nails?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year



3.
Does your skin appear pale?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

4.
Do you find your hands or feet feeling cold?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

5.
Do you suffer from headaches?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year



6.
Do you have difficulty catching your breath, even when not exercising or doing something strenuous?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

7.
Do you experience chest pain?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

8.
Do you find yourself craving or chewing on ice?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year

9.
Do you notice you're bruising more easily?

- Yes
 No

If yes, how often do you experience this symptom:

_____ x/week
_____ x/month
_____ x/year



If you feel you might be at risk, ask your doctor the following:

- Could my health condition(s) increase my risk of iron deficiency?
- Have my iron levels been checked? What were the results of the last test?
- How often do you normally test my iron levels?
- Can I request a blood test, such as the below, to confirm if I have iron deficiency, based on my new symptoms?
- Could my symptoms be indicative of another underlying medical condition?

(Add your own questions)

If your iron levels are low, ask your doctor the following:

- What can I do to try to increase my iron levels?
- Will I always have iron deficiency or is it something that can be managed?
- What may be the long-term effects of iron deficiency?
- Which treatment options are right for me?
- How do I know if my treatment is working?
- What are potential side effects of different treatment options?
- How long should my treatment take to be effective?
- What should I do if I experience side effects from oral iron supplements/IV iron?
- When should I have my iron levels tested again?

(Add your own questions)

Next steps:

(Some space for notes)

References

- 1 Auerbach M, Adamson JW. How we diagnose and treat iron deficiency anemia. *Am J Hematol*. 2016;91(1):31-38.
- 2 Fernando B, et al. A guide to diagnosis of iron deficiency and iron deficiency anemia in digestive diseases. *World J Gastroenterol*. 2009 Oct 7; 15(37): 4638-4643.
- 3 Schieffer KM, et al. Association of Iron Deficiency Anemia With Hearing Loss in US Adults. *JAMA Otolaryngol Neck Surg*. 2017;(800).
- 4 Trost LB, et al. The diagnosis and treatment of iron deficiency and its potential relationship to hair loss. *J Am Acad Dermatol*. 2006;54(5):824-44.
- 5 Cashman MW, Sloan SB. Nutrition and nail disease. *Clin Dermatol*. 2010;28(4):420-5.



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