

Iron Tablets

For low haemoglobin, and to prepare you for surgery

Your iron: _____ Take: _____ ☐ every day ☐ every alternate day

How to take it

- Best on an **empty stomach**, about an hour before food. If that upsets your stomach, take it with a light meal.
- **Take it with lemon water, orange juice or amla** — vitamin C greatly increases how much iron you absorb.
- **Avoid tea, coffee, milk, calcium tablets and antacids within 2 hours** either side. Tea in particular blocks iron absorption almost completely.
- If you are on liquid iron, take it through a straw and rinse your mouth afterwards, so it does not stain your teeth.

BLACK STOOLS ARE NORMAL
Iron turns the stool black. This is harmless and expected. It is not bleeding. (But if the stool is black *and* sticky or tarry, and you are also taking painkillers, tell us.)

IF IT CAUSES CONSTIPATION OR NAUSEA — TELL US, DO NOT STOP
This is the commonest reason people give up on iron, and it is fixable:

- Taking it on **alternate days** often works just as well with far less discomfort.
- There are gentler forms of iron we can change you to.
- Increase water and fibre, and we can add a mild laxative.

KEEP IRON TABLETS LOCKED AWAY FROM CHILDREN
Iron overdose is one of the commonest serious poisonings in small children. A handful of adult iron tablets can kill a toddler.

How long? Even after your blood count is normal, keep taking iron for **about 3 more months** to refill your body's stores. Stopping as soon as the report is normal is why anaemia comes back.