

# *Southern Indiana Nephrology and Hypertension*

## **Iron Deficiency in Anemia**

**Anemia** is a common problem in which there are not enough healthy red blood cells to provide the body with the oxygen that it needs. Anemia can cause many **symptoms**, such as feeling tired, weak, and cold, looking pale, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, and restless legs.

Iron deficiency may **cause** or contribute to anemia. Up to 20% of females and 3% of males have been found to be iron deficient. This may occur as a result of not enough iron in the diet, poor absorption by the body, or blood loss (through the stomach or intestines, hemorrhoids, heavy menstrual periods, or other routes). Without enough iron, the body cannot produce the healthy red blood cells that the body needs to carry oxygen.

**Treatment** of iron deficiency may include:

**Investigating** possible sources of blood loss should be done by looking at blood work and testing the stools to be sure there is no blood loss from the colon or intestine. If blood loss is found, further testing, such as a colonoscopy, may be required. Blood loss should be treated first, if discovered.

Increasing the iron in your **diet** by including more iron- rich foods like:

Raisins and other dried fruits	meats (liver is the highest source)
Fish, oysters	poultry
almonds	green, leafy vegetables
eggs (especially yolks)	legumes (peas and beans)
whole grain bread	iron enriched cereals

Increasing your vitamin C intake (foods like green peppers, citrus fruits and juices, strawberries, tomatoes, broccoli, turnip greens and other leafy greens, sweet and white potatoes, and cantaloupe) helps with absorption.

Even cooking in cast iron skillets may increase the iron content of foods!

**Avoid** drinking tea, as it will bind to the iron making it unusable by the body.

**Iron tablets:**

Over-the-counter: iron sulfate 2 pills twice a day

Prescription iron pills: Niferex 1 pill twice a day

Or Ferrous fumarate 1 pill twice a day

**Intravenous (IV) iron:**

Venofer- given IV at the hospital; takes about an hour, once a week, for five weeks; this will likely last for several months, but may have to be repeated at some time

IV iron push administered in the office- FDA approval for this will be coming soon!