



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 recognising 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

Simply put, 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.² Iron also plays a vital role in fighting off infections and illness,³ maintaining energy levels³ and normal brain function. Iron deficiency means that there is not enough iron available in the body to enable it to function properly.⁵

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.⁶ 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.⁷

Iron deficiency, or iron deficiency anaemia?

There is a clinical difference between iron deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia.⁵ Having low iron availability (iron deficiency), doesn't necessarily mean you will develop iron deficiency anaemia. To determine whether someone is iron deficient or has iron deficiency anaemia, a blood test is performed, which will look at a number of things:

- Haemoglobin level: this is the main component of red blood cells, which requires iron to transport oxygen around the body. A blood test will confirm if the level falls within the normal range expected for the person's age, sex, and physiological status (e.g. pregnancy).⁸ Haemoglobin alone however, cannot be used to diagnose iron deficiency.⁹
- Serum ferritin: measures the amount of iron that is stored in the body.¹⁰
- Transferrin saturation (TSAT): measures how much of your stored iron is available and can be used to make new red blood cells.¹¹

Awareness

Despite the serious consequences and high prevalence of iron deficiency,¹² it is still an under-recognised condition. As a result, many people are unaware that their health and well-being are being compromised.^{13,14} Even among those people who are aware of iron deficiency, some cannot recognise its symptoms.¹⁵ It is because of this lack of awareness that we are focused on education around the symptoms and impact of iron deficiency and recommending that people speak to a healthcare professional if they recognise any of the symptoms.

TAKE IRON SERIOUSLY

IRON DEFICIENCY DAY 26TH NOVEMBER



ABOUT IRON DEFICIENCY DAY

Iron Deficiency Day takes place every year on November 26.

The day is dedicated to:

- **Raising awareness about the serious public health problem iron deficiency poses**
- **Highlighting the significant impact iron deficiency and iron deficiency anaemia can have on the lives of those living with it¹**
- **Helping people recognise the common and often overlooked symptoms**



TAKE IRON SERIOUSLY

Raise awareness of Iron Deficiency and Iron Deficiency Anaemia on **26th November**

SYMPTOM CHECKLIST

If you recognise one or more of these symptoms in yourself, you should visit a healthcare professional to have them check your iron levels and investigate further. There are simple tests to find out what's wrong and help you to manage your iron levels.



Feeling worn out

Feeling permanently exhausted or extremely tired is often referred to as fatigue – one of the most common symptoms of iron deficiency. If you feel drained or have little energy or enthusiasm to complete daily tasks, you could be iron deficient.^{2,3,4}

Restless legs syndrome

If you feel the need to move your legs to get rid of uncomfortable or strange sensations while resting, you may have restless legs syndrome. The feelings are sometimes described as itching, burning or crawling and can often affect your sleep.^{2,12}

Brittle nails

If you have nails with abnormalities in colour, shape or texture, it could be because of a lack of iron. In particular, nails that are dipped in the middle and raised at the edges to give a rounded appearance like a spoon^{2,7}



Paleness

Iron deficiency can make you look pale. This is more noticeable on your face, nails, inner mouth and lining of your eyes. If you pull your lower eyelid down and it is a very pale peach colour or yellow, this may indicate that you have iron deficiency anaemia.²

Fatigue

Extreme tiredness can affect more than just the body – you can suffer from mental fatigue too. If you are finding it hard to focus or manage your mood, it could mean that you are iron deficient.³

Irritability

Exhaustion, mood swings and an inability to concentrate can cause frustration. If you feel that you are easily irritated, it may be a sign of iron deficiency.^{3,10}

Memory loss

Are you forgetting little things more frequently? Talk to your doctor about what could be causing your short-term memory loss; it may be because of iron deficiency.⁹

Hearing loss

There are many reasons why you might suddenly struggle to hear properly and it is important you get a proper diagnosis but it could be associated with iron deficiency anaemia.⁵

Low immune system

If your body doesn't have enough iron available then you may become prone to recurrent infections like common colds.¹⁵



Unusual cravings

If you regularly feel like eating non-food items like clay, dirt, ash and starch, it is important not to give in to your cravings and seek medical advice.¹⁷

Cold hands & feet

If you find yourself struggling to keep warm or your hands and feet get cold easily, you may have iron deficiency.¹³



Loss of hair

If you are losing clumps of hair or more hair than normal, it could be an indication of iron deficiency.^{2,6}

Chewing ice

One of the most common symptoms of iron deficiency is the desire to eat or chew ice. Regularly chewing ice can damage the teeth and the gums, so it is important to seek treatment.^{2,10}



Headaches

If you are getting more headaches or they are becoming more severe you should speak to your doctor to check your iron levels.^{3,16}

Bruising

Bruising easily has long been associated with iron deficiency.⁸



Loss of breath

If you find you can't exercise as much as you would like, or you get out of breath doing simple things like walking up the stairs, you may be iron deficient.¹⁴

Loss of libido

A lack of iron can lead to a low sexual libido and erectile dysfunction. You should talk to a healthcare professional, if you are experiencing either.²

Mouth ulcers

Mouth ulcers (sore white patches on the inside of your mouth) can occur for many reasons but, in some cases, mouth ulcers can also develop due to iron deficiency.⁹

ENDORSED BY: OBSTETRICAL & GYNAECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE (OGSS)



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Vifor Pharma, a company of the Vifor Pharma Group, is a world leader in the discovery, development, manufacturing and marketing of pharmaceutical products for the treatment of iron deficiency. The company also offers a diversified portfolio of prescription and non-prescription medicines. Vifor Pharma's operational headquarters are in Zurich, Switzerland, and the company has an increasingly global presence and a broad network of affiliates and partners around the world. For more information about Vifor Pharma, please visit www.viforpharma.com.

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