

## **IRON SUPPLEMENTS**

**(ferrous sulfate, ferrous fumarate, ferrous gluconate, iron polysaccharide complex)**

### **WHAT IT DOES:**

Iron is used by the body to make red blood cells. Red blood cells contain hemoglobin which carry oxygen to all the tissues in your body. Without enough iron, your hemoglobin count will be low and the red blood cells will not be able to carry enough oxygen. You may feel tired or short of breath. This is often called iron deficiency anemia.

Your doctor will check your blood to see if you have enough iron. If you do not, it is important to take iron supplements as prescribed to increase the iron in your blood. If you are taking Erythropoietin (EPO) or Darbepoietin (ARANESP®), you may need to take extra iron even if you feel well because your body is now making more red blood cells and using up iron more quickly.

### **HOW IT WORKS:**

In kidney disease, your body uses up red blood cells more quickly than usual. This means your body must make red blood cells more often to replace those that you lose. Often, you do not have enough iron in your diet to keep up with this increase in need.

If you are taking Erythropoietin or Darbepoietin, but do not have enough iron, the injections will not work as well as they should. You will need a higher dose and the red blood cells that are made may not work as well to carry oxygen as they should.

### **HOW TO TAKE IT:**

Iron is absorbed best on an empty stomach (2 hours after a meal) and will bind to antacids and some medications. It is best to take all the iron tablets (or liquid) you have been prescribed all at once at bedtime. If the iron upsets your stomach, you can take it with a small non-dairy snack (but you will absorb less so try to take it on an empty stomach).

If you are taking calcium supplements or other phosphate binders, be sure to space the iron at least 1 hour apart from these medications because they will bind the iron and prevent you from absorbing it.

If you have other bedtime medications, check with your pharmacist to be sure it is all right to take them with the iron.

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU MISS A DOSE:**

If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If you do not remember the missed dose until it is almost time for the next dose, just skip the missed dose. **DO NOT DOUBLE YOUR DOSE OR TRY TO “CATCH UP” BY TAKING EXTRA DOSES.**

**POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS:**

Constipation is common. Sometimes diarrhea, mild stomach upset, nausea, heartburn, dark green or black stool, or darker urine may occur.

**RELATION TO DIET:**

Although many foods contain iron, getting enough just from your diet is very difficult, especially if you are on a protein restricted diet. Taking iron supplements, when prescribed by your doctor, helps ensure that you get enough iron to meet your body’s need.

**WHY I AM TAKING THIS MEDICINE:**

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