



## What Is Iron And Why Is It Important?

Anemia is a health condition that develops when the body lacks enough healthy red blood cells. Many dialysis patients develop anemia due to a decreased production of erythropoietin by the kidneys. Erythropoietin is a hormone produced by the kidneys that stimulates the bone marrow to make red blood cells, which in turn delivers oxygen to the tissues via hemoglobin (the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen to tissues).

For dialysis patients, erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) have been administered to maintain hemoglobin values. Anemia therapy is not limited to ESAs but also include the use of iron agents. Iron is an essential mineral in the body that assists in the transport of oxygen. People usually get their serving of iron through diet and iron supplements. Diet alone cannot supply enough iron to meet a dialysis patient's needs. In dialysis, iron administration and maintenance are a part of the patient's anemia therapy. Iron is usually given intravenously (IV) during their hemodialysis treatment.

Low iron levels may cause a dialysis patient to:

- Feel more tired than usual
- Feel weaker
- Look pale
- Feel depressed
- Feel short of breath with activity
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Feel numbness or cold to hands and feet
- Have a faster heart rate

### **Iron Therapy:**

There are two (2) widely used and effective approaches to IV iron treatment:

1. Periodic iron repletion – replenishing of iron stores whenever iron status tests decrease to less than the target range by administering a series of IV iron doses when necessary.
2. Continuous maintenance – to maintain iron status tests stable within target range by administering small doses of iron at regular intervals.

### **Mission Statement**

*To provide leadership and assistance to renal dialysis and transplant facilities in a manner that supports continuous improvement in patient care, outcomes, safety and satisfaction.*

**Dietary Iron:**

Patients need enough iron to reach and maintain a healthy hemoglobin level. Patients can help increase their iron by eating iron-rich foods. Listed below are some iron-rich foods.

Chicken	Clams	Eggs
Beef	Oysters	Enriched white bread
Turkey	Shrimp	Raisins
Pork	Spinach	Lentils
Tuna	Soybeans	Whole wheat
Halibut	Tofu	Iron fortified cereal
Crab	Oatmeal	Beans

***Please note:***

**Check with your dietician before making any changes in your diet. Some iron rich foods may be limited in your dialysis diet.**

It is important that dialysis patients follow their recommended diets. This will help the patient feel better and have more energy.