

## Iron-Deficiency Anaemia

### What is anaemia?

This is a condition in which there is a shortage of red cells in the blood or a deficiency of haemoglobin (the oxygen carrying pigment) in these cells. When anaemia occurs the body doesn't get enough oxygen and weakness and fatigue result.

The most common cause of anaemia in the UK is a lack of iron. Iron is needed to make haemoglobin. Anaemia caused by a lack of iron is called iron deficiency anaemia.

### Symptoms of Iron-deficiency anaemia

Early Symptoms	Established Symptoms	
Loss of appetite	Weakness	Loss of libido
Constipation	Fatigue	Overall Pallor
Headaches	Coldness of the extremities	Pale and Brittle nails
Irritability	Depression	Soreness in the mouth
Difficulty concentrating	Dizziness	Pale lips and eyes
		Cessation of menstruation

### How is iron deficiency anaemia diagnosed?

A blood test can confirm that you are anaemic. A full blood count (FBC) is the main test. To confirm that the cause of the anaemia is a lack of iron you may need to have a blood test that measures a protein called ferritin. The level of this protein usually reflects the total body iron stores – a low level indicates that you have a lack of iron.

### Supplementation

Once iron deficiency anaemia has been confirmed it is likely your doctor will prescribe you iron tablets. Other treatments may also be advised, depending on the underlying cause. Various iron tablets and liquid medicines are available so your doctor will advise on a suitable one for you. The length of course will vary depending on the severity of anaemia and a blood test after a few weeks will show if the treatment is working. Once the blood level is back to normal, you should continue to take iron for at least three further months to ensure that reserves of iron are built up in your body.

## **How to increase iron in your diet**

Dietary iron exists in two different forms:

- Heme iron only in animal tissues
- Non-heme iron in plant foods - Non-heme iron is less easily absorbed by the body.

### **Good sources of Iron:**

- Red meat (beef, lamb, pork, offal) is rich in iron that is easily absorbed. The darker the meat, the more iron it contains
- Poultry contains some iron, and leg meat contains more iron than breast meat
- Fish contains some iron too, especially oily fish and molluscs (mussels, etc.)

### **Vegetarian Sources**

- Iron can be found in pulses such as lentils and beans and in nuts and seeds
- Green leafy vegetables, such as watercress contain some iron
- Salad vegetables (including tomatoes) contain vitamin C and help the body to absorb iron
- Eating fresh fruit or drinking fruit juice with meals greatly improves iron absorption
- Some dried fruits such as apricots, prunes, raisins are a good source of iron
- Black strap molasses is a great source of iron and essential B vitamins. Consume at least 1 tablespoon of blackstrap molasses twice daily
- Avoid beer, sweets, dairy products, ice cream and soft drinks. The additives in these foods interfere with iron absorption.
- For the same reason avoid coffee (which contains polyphenols) and tea (which contains tannins)

To find out more or to book a nutrition appointment for a personalised nutrition plan please contact our reception on **08447 700 800** or **reception.city@puresportsmed.com**