



Iron Supplements for Kidney Disease

Kidney disease may cause a problem with the growth of new red blood cells. Your health care provider may suggest that you take an erythropoiesis-stimulating agent (ESA) to stimulate your body to make red blood cells. This medicine may cause iron deficiency, so iron supplements are often needed.

Your provider will decide what iron supplement is right for you. Please tell your provider if you have trouble taking iron. There are several sources available.

Tips for taking iron supplements

- Take your iron supplement between meals to improve absorption. Take it 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal.
- Iron supplements may cause nausea. Take with a snack such as unsalted crackers or toast, or with a source of Vitamin C.
- Include foods high in Vitamin C in your diet to help increase the absorption of iron in your body.

Examples include:

- ▶ ½ cup vitamin C fortified cranberry juice
- ▶ ½ cup grapefruit juice or ½ grapefruit
- ▶ ½ cup mandarin oranges
- ▶ ½ cup strawberries
- ▶ ½ cup bell pepper strips

Please note:

- ▶ Orange juice is not recommended due to its high potassium content.
- ▶ Watch your portions and choose fruits or fluids within your meal plan.
- ▶ Count these foods as part of your fluid restriction guidelines.
- ▶ Ask your provider about an ascorbic acid supplement if you cannot eat these foods.



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- Calcium binds with iron and makes it unavailable for absorption by the body. If you take a calcium-based binder such as calcium carbonate, Tums, Phos-Ex, Phos-Lo, Cal-Carb or calcium acetate with meals, wait at least 1 hour after the meal before taking iron.
- Some foods prevent iron absorption. Avoid taking iron with coffee or tea, milk, spinach, fiber-containing foods or eggs. Wait at least 1 hour before taking iron.
- Stomach acid may help with iron absorption. Take iron 2 hours before and 4 hours after taking antacids, histamine receptors and proton pump inhibitors.
- Iron supplements may cause constipation. Try these tips and talk to your provider about taking a stool softener or laxative:
 - Eat more raw fruits and vegetables. The diet for kidney disease can be hard to manage as some people need to restrict potassium and phosphorus. Talk to your doctor or dietitian before making changes to your diet.
 - Drink water within your fluid guidelines.
 - Be as active as your provider recommends.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to patienteducation.osumc.edu or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.