

Low Iron Levels in Your Blood during Pregnancy

Reference Number: ULHT-LFT-3711 v2

Issued: November 2025

Review Date: November 2027

Your midwife will offer you blood tests at your booking appointment and again at your 28 and 34-week appointments. A further blood test (Ferritin) may also be offered for some women. The results of these tests may show that you have a low iron store or that you are anaemic.

During pregnancy it is important that your iron levels are high enough so that your body can cope with birth and with bleeding after the birth.

If you have low iron, you may feel dizzy, tired, weak or experience palpitations. You may also have no obvious symptoms.

During pregnancy your body needs around 3 times more iron as a non-pregnant woman. This requirement increases as your pregnancy progresses.

How can I increase my iron stores?

Only 15% of the iron taken through diet is absorbed into the body, so it is important that you consume a lot of iron through the food you eat.

We recommend a balanced diet that includes lots of iron-rich foods:

- Beef, pork, chicken, veal, fish
- Fortified cereals, rice, wheat, oats, dried fruits, beans, tofu, dark green leafy vegetables (e.g. spinach, kale)

Oral iron supplements

If your iron stores are low your midwife or doctor may offer you tablets to increase your iron supply. These tablets should be taken as directed, on an empty stomach and ideally with a source of Vitamin C. This helps the body to absorb more iron.

Vitamin C sources include fresh orange juice, or a Vitamin C supplement.

Your midwife will offer a blood test 3 to 4 weeks after you start taking iron supplements to check your body is responding well to the treatment.

Liquid iron supplements are available – please discuss this with your midwife or doctor.

You may benefit from iron supplements during pregnancy, or after your baby is born.

Other methods to increase iron levels

If your iron stores are very low, or if your body is not responding to oral iron

supplements, you may be offered an intravenous (IV) iron infusion. This will improve your iron levels over a period of 2 weeks. Your doctor will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an iron infusion with you before you decide whether to have it.

The final option is a blood transfusion. This is offered to women who have extremely low iron levels where this is significantly affecting their day-to-day life. It is most commonly offered to women who have bled heavily following birth, to quickly restore their iron levels and aid their recovery.

Maternity

Lincoln Labour Ward	01522 573889
Lincoln Antenatal Assessment Centre	01522 573138
Boston Labour Ward	01205 445424
Boston Antenatal Assessment Centre	01205 445144

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