About your medication

IRON PREPARATIONS

(FERROLIQUID, FEFOL, FERRO-GRADUMET AND FGF®)

There are many different iron preparations containing different amounts of iron. It is important to discuss the particular medication you are taking with your doctor or pharmacist.

Do not change from one preparation to another without checking first.
**WHAT ARE IRON SUPPLEMENTS?**
Iron supplements are medications containing ferrous salts. They are available as tablets, capsules or mixtures. They do not require a doctor’s prescription, but it is important that they are used only after talking with your doctor.

**WHAT IS IT FOR?**
Iron is a mineral that the body needs to produce red blood cells. Most people get enough iron from their diet. When the body does not get enough iron, it cannot produce enough red blood cells needed to keep you in good health. This condition is called iron deficiency or iron deficiency anaemia.

**HOW TO TAKE THIS MEDICINE**
It is important that this medication is taken only as directed and not given to other people. Iron preparations are best taken on an empty stomach, but because they can cause stomach upsets they can be taken with food or immediately after food.

Slow-release and specially coated tablets should be swallowed whole.

Take iron preparations with plenty of fluid to avoid the problem of constipation.

When iron mixtures come into contact with the teeth they can cause staining.

The following steps can help to avoid this:

- Mix the dose with some water or fruit juice and use a drinking straw to give the dose
- Give the dose using a syringe or dropper, and follow with a drink
- Brush the teeth after giving the dose.

**WHAT TO DO IF A DOSE IS MISSED**
If you miss a dose of the medication it can be taken as soon as you remember. Do not take the missed dose if it is close to the next one; just take the next dose as normal. **Do not double-up on any doses.**

**STORING THE MEDICINE**
It is important to keep iron preparations locked away out of the reach of children.

Do not keep the medicines in the bathroom, near the kitchen sink or in other damp, warm places because this may make them less effective. Store in a cool, dry place, away from heat and direct light.

**USE OF OTHER MEDICINES**
Care must be taken when using iron preparations with some other medicines. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving any prescription medicine or medicine purchased without prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket, or health food shop. This is important for

- Antacids used to treat indigestion (e.g. Mylanta ®). The iron preparations should be taken one hour before antacids.
- Fluroquinolone antibiotics (e.g. ciprofloxacin, norfloxacin) and tetracycline antibiotics (e.g. doxycycline, minocycline). The iron preparation should be taken two hours before or after the antibiotic.

This list is not complete. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about possible interactions with any over-the-counter or complementary medicines or recreational substances (e.g. alcohol).

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- Iron preparations usually have to be taken for some months to be helpful.
- Small amounts of iron are often included in multi-vitamin preparations but these amounts are not enough for treatment of iron deficiency.

**POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS**

Side effects can occur while taking iron preparations. Some of these are not serious and will go away with time or after the dose has been changed. Others are more serious and require you to check with your doctor.

**Less serious side effects include:**

- abdominal or stomach pain, cramping or soreness
- nausea or vomiting
- constipation or diarrhoea
- stools can become dark green or black (this is caused by unabsorbed iron).

**More Serious** (Contact doctor as soon as possible if any of the following occur):

- severe vomiting or diarrhoea
- blood in the vomit or stools. Blood in the stools will make them red or black and sticky
- chest or throat pain, or ‘heartburn’
- dark urine

**Allergic reaction** (Stop medicine and see doctor immediately):

- skin rash, itching or hives, swollen mouth or lips, wheezing or difficulty breathing
This leaflet answers some common questions about your child’s medicine. It does not contain all available information. It does not take the place of talking to your child’s doctor or pharmacist. The leaflet may differ from information in the manufacturer’s Consumer Medicine Information. The information in this leaflet reflects the usage of medicine under medical supervision by patients of The Royal Children’s Hospital. Medicine may be used in children in different ways or for different reasons than in adults - for more information see the leaflet "Medicines for Children". This leaflet includes information current at the time of review of the document – OCTOBER 2010.