

ferrous sulfate, ferrous gluconate, ferrous fumarate (Palafer®), polysaccharide—iron complex (Feramax®), heme iron polypeptide (Proferrin®)

## What does this medication do?

- This medication is an iron supplement used to treat anemia.
- Anemia is when your body does not have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen around. It can sometimes happen when your body does not have enough iron, but there are other causes of anemia too. When you have anemia, you can feel tired, cold, short of breath, or have difficulty in concentrating.
- Sometimes, you cannot get enough iron from foods and need more from a pill or supplement. However, it is important to eat iron-rich foods in addition to taking an iron supplement. Iron rich foods include meats, vegetables, and whole grains such as iron-fortified cereals.

## How should I take this medication?

- If you are taking **ferrous sulfate, ferrous gluconate, or ferrous fumarate**, it is best to take on an empty stomach (without food) at bedtime or at least two hours before or after a meal.
  - \* Certain foods (such as dairy products) and other medications can make iron pills not work as well.
  - \* Medications that can affect these iron pills include calcium supplements, antacids (example: TUMS®, Diovol®), phosphate binders, some antibiotics, and others. If you start any new medications or supplements, ask your pharmacist how to take them with your iron medication and always ask your pharmacist if you have questions.
  - \* If you have trouble tolerating your iron supplement on an empty stomach, you may take it with a light, non-dairy snack (example: fruit, crackers, toast).
- If you are taking **polysaccharide-iron complex** or **heme iron polypeptide**, you can take the medication with or without food.
- Your prescriber will tell you how long to take your iron supplement for. It can take 4 to 6 months to fully replenish iron stores, but some people need to continue their iron beyond this, even if your hemoglobin and iron levels increase.
- Your prescriber will tell you how often to take this medication. For most people this will be every day, but if you are having trouble tolerating your iron some people take it every second day.

## Are there any side effects?

- Common side effects may include constipation, diarrhea, heart burn, and upset stomach.
  - \* These side effects often go away as your body gets used to the medication.
  - \* If you are having constipation, talk to your pharmacist about using a laxative.
- Iron supplements can cause dark/black coloured stools (poop). This is normal and not a cause for concern.

## Other information:

- Your doctor/health care team will monitor your response to iron pills using blood tests, so it is important that you do all the blood tests ordered at the times you are asked to.
- Keep your oral iron supplement out of the reach of small children. Ingesting too much iron can be very dangerous.