



# IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA IN PREGNANCY

## WHAT IS IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA?

- Iron composes part of a red blood cell (hemoglobin) that carries oxygen in your blood stream.
- If you don't have enough iron, there is less hemoglobin in your blood to carry oxygen to all parts of your body.

## WHY IS GETTING ENOUGH IRON IMPORTANT IN PREGNANCY?

- During pregnancy, your body makes more blood to supply the baby with oxygen and nutrition.
- Iron is needed for your body to make more blood cells for this increased blood volume.
- You also share some of your iron with the baby to make their own blood cells.

## HOW DO I INCREASE MY IRON INTAKE?

- The best food sources of iron are **meat, chicken, fish, eggs, dried beans, and fortified grains found in cornmeal, bread, cereal, pasta and rice.** Green vegetables have much less iron than these foods.
- Your body absorbs iron from food more efficiently than from an iron supplement.
- Adequate intake of vitamin C also helps your body absorb iron more efficiently. Food sources of vitamin C include **orange and grapefruit juice, strawberries, pineapple, kale, broccoli, tomatoes, and peppers.**

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM GETTING ENOUGH IRON?

- Your blood count will be checked several times during your pregnancy. If your blood tests show you have low iron (anemia), your provider will recommend an iron supplement along with increasing iron-rich foods.
- Typical symptoms of anemia include tiredness, dizziness, shortness of breath, or fainting.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IRON SUPPLEMENTS?

- There are several types of over-the-counter (OTC) iron supplements. Our providers usually recommend Slow FE as it is more easily absorbed than other OTC supplements.
- All iron supplements can cause constipation and/or mild stomach upset.
  - Increase your fluid and fiber intake to limit constipation.
  - Take the iron supplement at bedtime or with food to limit stomach upset.
- Foods or medications high in calcium can inhibit the absorption of iron.
  - Avoid yogurt, milk, cheese, and dairy products within 2 hours of taking iron.
  - Avoid taking an antacid within 2 hours of taking iron.

## WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE OFFICE?

- Call the office and speak with a nurse if you have any symptoms of anemia: excessive tiredness, dizziness, shortness of breath, or fainting, or with any questions about iron deficiency.