



... ask your  
*doctor* about  
transfusion-related  
*iron overload*



***Mission:***

Iron Disorders Institute (IDI) exists so that people with iron disorders receive an early, accurate diagnosis, appropriate treatment and are equipped to live healthy lives.

***For more information about iron:***

**Books:**

*Guide to Hemochromatosis*  
*Guide to Anemia*  
*Exposing The Hidden Dangers of Iron*  
*Cooking with Less Iron*

**Newsletter:**

*nanograms* for patients

**At-a-Glance Desk Reference Charts  
for Physicians:**

*Hereditary Hemochromatosis*  
*Iron Overload with Anemia*

**Web sites:** [www.irondisorders.org](http://www.irondisorders.org)  
[www.hemochromatosis.org](http://www.hemochromatosis.org)

***Contact us:***

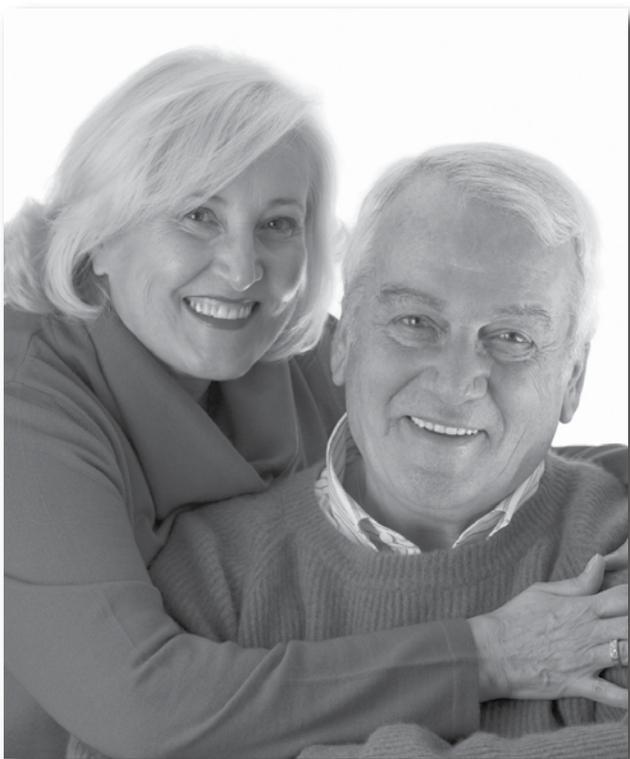
Iron Disorders Institute  
2722 Wade Hampton Blvd, Suite A  
Greenville, SC 29615  
Phone: 864-292-1175 FAX 864-292-1878  
Toll Free: 888-565-IRON (4766)

For more information about iron, visit our website  
[www.irondisorders.org](http://www.irondisorders.org)

*What Every*  
**Transfusion Patient**  
*Should Know about*  
**Iron Overload**  
*(too much iron in the body)*



## If you have had more than 8 blood transfusions...



### *About too much iron*

**Blood transfusions** can be life-saving for people who do not have adequate red blood cells. Some people may need blood transfusions for a short time or for the rest of their life. While transfusions deliver vital red blood cells, what some patients may not realize is that each unit of blood contains 250 milligrams of iron. Generally, a person needs only 1 milligram of iron a day to replace what is lost from normal body function. Once iron gets into our system it is used or stored; when stored levels become too high, the excess iron begins to act like a poison.

The body has no efficient way to get rid of excess iron. With repeated blood transfusion, a person continues to build up iron. If unneeded iron is not removed, iron overload will result and organ damage can occur. The heart, liver, spleen, pancreas, and the endocrine system are most vulnerable to damage caused by iron overload.

#### ***Repeated Blood Transfusions:***

After as few as 10 blood transfusions the signs and symptoms of iron overload can be seen in some people. It is important to be aware of this and discuss with your doctor a plan to lower excessive levels of iron as part of your therapy to achieve iron balance and adequate levels of red blood cells.

**Your doctor will advise you of  
therapy choices for  
iron reduction.**

### *Getting rid of too much iron*

#### ***Iron reduction therapies:***

Iron can only be removed with blood donation (phlebotomy) or with prescription medicines that are designed to specifically bind with and remove iron from the body.

#### ***Phlebotomy:***

The same as blood donation, except a doctor's order is required. Your hemoglobin level must be adequate to tolerate this procedure.

#### ***Iron Chelation Therapy:***

If your hemoglobin is low but your body iron high you will need special medicines to reduce iron levels. There are a number of iron chelators, but in the USA, there are two presently approved for use to lower excessive iron levels due to repeated transfusions. These drugs are: deferoxamine (deffer-OX-uh-meem) brand name Desferal® and deferasirox (deaf-ur-ES-ur-ox) brand name Exjade®. Your doctor will advise which iron reduction approach is best for you.

**Reduction  
of excess iron levels  
is important to your  
health!**