What is Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Iron deficiency anemia (IDA) is a common condition caused by having too little iron in the body. If untreated, IDA can cause serious health issues, including heart problems or pregnancy complications in women. IDA can even impair your ability to work.

Symptoms:
- Difficulty concentrating
- Shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Mood changes
- Dizziness
- Fast heartbeat
- Weakness
- Brittle nails
- Chest pain
- Ice cravings
- Fatigue
- Pale skin

If you have IDA, your body has an iron shortage, so you can’t make enough hemoglobin, an oxygen-carrying protein found in red blood cells. This means your body may not be able to produce enough healthy red blood cells or carry enough oxygen to the tissues in your body. This can happen if you have:

- Too little iron in your diet
- Blood loss
- Problems absorbing iron

IDA is a Common Complication in Patients with CKD, and There Are Several Reasons Why:

Blood Loss
If you have CKD, blood loss from dialysis, gastrointestinal bleeding, or frequent laboratory blood tests—all of which are common among patients with CKD—can contribute to IDA. When you lose blood, you lose iron, too. If you lose enough iron without replacing it, IDA can develop.

Inflammation
Patients with CKD may have difficulty absorbing iron due to inflammation. In CKD, inflammation can drive up levels of hepcidin, a hormone that helps regulate iron absorption. When hepcidin levels are high, iron cannot be adequately absorbed, which can lead to IDA.

Medication
Some common medications in CKD, such as phosphate binders, can interfere with iron absorption, making patients more at risk for IDA. In addition, many patients with CKD take medications called erythropoiesis stimulating agents (ESAs) to help them make red blood cells. ESAs cause the iron in your body to be used faster than normal. If you don’t take extra iron to replenish your body’s iron supply, you may develop IDA.

Diet
Patients who are on dialysis may have to adhere to a diet that limits certain iron-rich foods (like red meats and beans), which can raise the risk of developing IDA.

Iron is an important building block of hemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells that carries the oxygen your tissues need.

IDA is Often Underdiagnosed & Undertreated in Patients with CKD:

- Some patients may have no symptoms at first
- Signs and symptoms of IDA can be similar to signs and symptoms of other conditions


All other references available upon request.

Restoring iron levels to normal can help improve anemia by increasing your hemoglobin levels.

If you have IDA symptoms, talk to your doctor about diagnosis and treatment options.