

# Understanding Your Iron Blood Tests

Think of the iron in your body like a city bus system

Your body uses iron to make **hemoglobin**, the part of your red blood cells that carries oxygen. When we check your iron, we look at a few numbers. Each one tells us something different.

## Meet the bus system



### Ferritin

= the bus station

It holds the people waiting there: your **stored iron**. The test tells us **how full the station is**.



### TIBC

= the seats on the buses

The buses (transferrin) carry iron in your blood. TIBC counts **how many seats** there are.



### Serum iron

= the riders

The iron that is **riding in your blood** right now.



### Iron saturation (%)

= how full the bus is

How many of the seats **have a rider** in them.

## What the results can look like

### Low iron (iron deficiency)

The station is almost empty, so few people ride. Your body sends out **extra buses** looking for riders, but they stay mostly empty.

Ferritin **low**

Iron **low**

TIBC **high**

Saturation **low**

Common reasons: blood loss (heavy periods, bleeding in the stomach or bowel), not enough iron in food, pregnancy, or trouble absorbing iron.

### Iron locked away (inflammation)

The station is full, but **the doors are locked**. Illness or swelling in the body tells it to keep iron in storage, so few people get on the bus. With iron on lockdown, your body also cuts back on buses.

Ferritin **normal or high**

Iron **low**

TIBC **normal or low**

Saturation **low**

Can happen with infections, arthritis, kidney disease, and other long-term health conditions.

### Too much iron

The station is **overflowing**, so your body doesn't need to collect more iron. It **cuts back on buses**, and the few buses still running are packed.

Ferritin **high**

Iron **high**

TIBC **low**

Saturation **high**

### My results

| Test            | My result | Normal range |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Ferritin        |           |              |
| Serum iron      |           |              |
| TIBC            |           |              |
| Iron saturation |           |              |
| Hemoglobin      |           |              |

### Notes from my visit

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Talk with your healthcare provider about what your results mean for you.