

GUIDELINE

IRON SUPPLEMENTATION

in postpartum
women



2016



**World Health
Organization**

Guideline:

**IRON SUPPLEMENTATION
IN POSTPARTUM WOMEN**

Guideline: Iron supplementation in postpartum women

1.Iron - administration and dosage. 2.Anemia, Iron-Deficiency - prevention and control. 3.Postpartum period. 4.Women. 5.Dietary Supplements. 6.Guideline. I.World Health Organization.

ISBN 978 92 4 154958 5

(NLM classification: WH 160)

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Printed by the WHO Document Production Services, Geneva, Switzerland

Cover design and document layout: Christopher Yuen

SUGGESTED CITATION

Guideline: Iron supplementation in postpartum women. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guideline was coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO) Evidence and Programme Guidance Unit, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development. Dr Lisa Rogers and Dr Juan Pablo Peña-Rosas oversaw the preparation of this document. WHO acknowledges the technical contributions of the following individuals (in alphabetical order): Ms Hala Boukerdenna, Dr Christian Breymann, Dr Luz Maria De-Regil, Ms Rae Galloway, Dr Pura Rayco-Solon, Dr Hanne Wielandt and Mr Gerardo Zamora.

We would like to express our gratitude to the WHO Guidelines Review Committee Secretariat and members of the Guidelines Review Committee for their technical support throughout the process. Thanks are also due to Mr Issa T Matta and Ms Chantal Streijffert Garon from the WHO Office of the Legal Counsel, for their support in the management of conflicts-of-interest procedures. Mrs Paule Pillard and Ms Jennifer Volonnino from the Evidence and Programme Guidance Unit, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, provided logistic support.

WHO gratefully acknowledges the technical input of the members of the WHO Steering Committee for Nutrition Guidelines Development and the WHO guidelines development groups, especially the chair of the meeting concerning this guideline, Dr Igor Veljkovic. WHO is also grateful to the Cochrane Pregnancy and Childbirth Group staff for their support during the development of the systematic review used to inform this guideline.

Financial support

WHO thanks the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for providing financial support for this work. The Micronutrient Initiative and the International Micronutrient Malnutrition Prevention and Control Program of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided financial support to the Evidence and Programme Guidance Unit, Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, for the commissioning of systematic reviews of nutrition interventions. Donors do not fund specific guidelines and do not participate in any decision related to the guideline development process, including the composition of research questions, membership of the guideline groups, conduct and interpretation of systematic reviews, or formulation of recommendations.

WHO GUIDELINE¹: IRON SUPPLEMENTATION IN POSTPARTUM WOMEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Iron deficiency is one of the most common forms of nutritional deficiencies, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, children and low-income populations. Iron deficiency often precedes anaemia, and anaemia during pregnancy is one of the strongest predictors of anaemia during the postpartum period, beginning just after childbirth throughout the subsequent 6 weeks. The consequences of iron deficiency and anaemia during the postpartum period can be serious and have long-term health implications for the mother and her infant.

This guideline reviews the evidence on the safety and effectiveness of iron supplementation in postpartum women.

Purpose of the guideline

This guideline aims to help Member States and their partners in their efforts to make informed decisions on the appropriate nutrition actions to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (1), the global targets set in the [Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition](#) (2) and the [Global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health \(2016–2030\)](#) (3).

The recommendation in this guideline is intended for a wide audience, including policy-makers, their expert advisers, economists, and technical and programme staff at organizations involved in the design, implementation and scaling-up of programmes for the prevention of anaemia, and in nutrition actions for public health.

The recommendation supersedes the previous WHO recommendation on iron supplementation in postpartum women (4).

Guideline development methodology

WHO developed the present evidence-informed recommendation using the procedures outlined in the [WHO handbook for guideline development](#) (5). The steps in this process included: (i) identification of priority questions and outcomes; (ii) retrieval of the evidence; (iii) assessment and synthesis of the evidence; (iv) formulation of recommendations, including research priorities; and planning for (v) dissemination; (vi) implementation, equity and ethical considerations; and (vii) impact evaluation and updating of the guideline. The Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation ([GRADE](#)) methodology was followed (6), to prepare evidence profiles related to preselected topics, based on up-to-date systematic reviews.

The guideline development group consisted of content experts, methodologists and representatives of

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