VITALS VAULT

FREE GUIDE

Iron runs low in stages

Blood markers shift long before symptoms do. Hemoglobin, the number most people are shown, is one of the last to move.

THE FIVE STAGES, IN ORDER

Stage	What changes in your blood	What still looks normal
1	Your iron stores start to empty. Ferritin, the storage marker, falls (often below about 30 ng/mL)	Serum iron and hemoglobin are still normal
2	Less iron is circulating. Serum iron and transferrin saturation both drop	Hemoglobin is still normal
3	Anemia appears. Hemoglobin falls below the normal range	Red cells are still a normal size
4	Red blood cells become small and pale	Nothing. Every marker has now moved
5	Symptoms set in, and tissues are affected	Nothing. This is usually when people are tested

REASONS IRON RUNS LOW BESIDES DIET

- [ ] Heavy periods or other blood loss
- [ ] Regular anti-inflammatory painkillers
- [ ] Ulcers, polyps or bowel disease
- [ ] Celiac disease
- [ ] Stomach or gut surgery
- [ ] Frequent blood donation
- [ ] Endurance running

CONDITIONS THAT CAN FEEL SIMILAR

- [ ] Low thyroid
- [ ] Anemia of chronic disease
- [ ] Depression
- [ ] Thalassemia trait

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- [ ] Was ferritin measured, or only hemoglobin?
- [ ] Which stage do my results fit?
- [ ] What is the likely cause, and does it need looking into?

Sources: Warner and Kamran 2023 (StatPearls). Hanif 2022. Gattermann 2021. Do not start iron without testing.

Educational only. Not medical advice, and not a diagnosis. Take this to your own clinician. vitalsvault.com