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# Ferritin & Iron: Quick Reference for Coaches

When to test, what to ask for, and how to talk about it

*Luke Rodriguez, MS, RDN — Aspire Performance & Nutrition*

Serum ferritin is the best single marker for iron status in athletes. A CBC alone misses low iron until it becomes full anemia. This one-pager gives coaches and families the lab language and thresholds that matter.

## Key thresholds

Females: treat ferritin below 40 ng/mL as a problem to address early. Males: aim above 50 ng/mL before high-mileage blocks. At altitude, demand is higher—retest 6–8 weeks after intervention.

## What to do

Ask families to request serum ferritin plus a CBC. Frame testing as performance maintenance, not body focus. Every-other-day iron dosing often absorbs better; take iron away from calcium and coffee.

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## Altitude

Iron demand rises at elevation. If you train or race above ~5,000 feet, ferritin monitoring is especially important.

## Common mistakes

Waiting for anemia to show up on a CBC; skipping retest after starting supplementation; not clarifying "ferritin" on the lab order.

## Quick FAQ

Q: How often to retest? A: 6–8 weeks after starting intervention. Q: Supplement form? A: Work with a physician or dietitian; ferrous sulfate or bisglycinate are common. Q: Food first? A: Yes, but when ferritin is low, food alone often isn't enough to correct it quickly.

## References

Aspire Performance & Nutrition — [aspireperformancerd.com](http://aspireperformancerd.com)