

Improve Your Iron Absorption

A well balanced diet along with exercise is needed for healthy living. The following suggestions should serve only as a guideline for those experiencing issues with absorbing iron. Please note that dietary measures alone may be insufficient to replace iron stores of those who donate blood frequently. Women donating red blood cells more than once a year and men who donate red blood cells more than twice per year should consider iron supplementation with their doctor.

Pairing heme iron with non-heme iron foods will improve your uptake (i.e. chicken breast with a side of broccoli).

Essential vitamins can also help with iron absorption and red blood cell production, such as vitamin C, vitamin B and folate. Please consult with your physician to determine if vitamin supplementation is best for you.



MKB-Iron Trifold_FINAL.indd 1

Why Is Your Iron Important? *Strengthening Your Blood*

MILLER-KEYSTONE BLOOD CENTER
a non-profit organization,
and the only community blood center
servicing your local hospitals.



For a list of donor center locations and hours,
please visit our website:
GIVEaPINT.org/blood-donor-center-locations.

Your Blood. Their Hope.®



MILLER-KEYSTONE
BLOOD CENTER

GIVEaPINT.org | 1-800-B-A-DONOR



SUP-MR-000004
September 2024

Your Blood. Their Hope.®



MILLER-KEYSTONE
BLOOD CENTER



What is Iron?

Iron is an essential part of many proteins and enzymes that help the body maintain good health and energy. It is also a major component of hemoglobin, the molecule responsible for transporting oxygen from the lungs to body tissues and carbon dioxide where it is exhaled through the lungs. Insufficient dietary iron may result in decreased red blood cell production. This may adversely affect your health, as well as negatively affect your ability to qualify for community blood donation.

How Much Iron is Enough Iron?

- Women (ages 19–50): 18 mg per day
- Men (ages 19 and up): 8 mg per day
- Women (ages 51 and up): 8 mg per day

Searching for Iron

There are two types of iron in foods:

Heme Iron – from animal sources such as meat, poultry and fish, which is relatively easy to absorb.

Non-heme Iron – from plant sources like vegetables, fruits, breads, cereals, eggs and nuts, which is more difficult to absorb.

Note: How well your body absorbs non-heme iron depends on what else you're eating. Some foods increase absorption, while others interfere.

Save the life
of someone within
your community, donate with
Miller-Keystone Blood Center

HEME IRON (easier to absorb)

Food	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
Beef, veal, tenderloin	3 oz.	3
Beef, ground	3 oz.	2.2
Turkey, dark meat	3 oz.	2
Fish, halibut	1/2 filet	1.8
Chicken, leg meat	3 oz.	1.7
Chicken, breast	3 oz.	1.1
Tuna Salad	1 cup	2

Other sources of heme iron: clams, shrimp, scallops, lamb, pork, liver, oysters, sardines.

NON-HEME IRON (harder to absorb)

Food	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
100% iron-fortified whole grain cereal (Total, Bran Flakes, GrapeNuts)	3/4 cup	18
Cheerios	1 cup	9.5
Bagel (4" dia.)	1 bagel	5.4
Cream of Wheat	1/2 cup	5.2
Oatmeal, instant	1/2 cup	s
Seeds, pumpkin	1 oz. 4.2	1.1
Baked beans	1/3 cup	3
Spinach	1/2 cup cooked, 1 cup raw	3
Asparagus	6 spears	2
Trail Mix (nuts, seeds, chocolate chips)	1/2 cup	2.5
Vegetable/soy burger	1 patty	2.9
Potato, baked with skin	1 medium	1.9
Egg, substitute, liquid	1/4 cup	1.3
Egg, whole	1 large	1

Other sources of non-heme iron: beans, peas, lentils, rice, soy milk, pumpkin, noodles, greens (collard, turnip, mustard, kale, swiss chard), mushrooms, fortified bread products, whole wheat bread, tomatoes, tofu, wheat germ, grits, nuts, seeds.

REFERENCES

1. National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplement, Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet: Iron, <http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/factsheets/iron.asp>; March 2013
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Research Service. 2011. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 25. Nutrient Data Laboratory Home page, <http://ndb.nal.usda.gov>; March 2013
3. American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition Care Manual, "Iron Deficiency Anemia Nutrition Therapy" and "Iron Content of Foods," <http://nutritioncaremanual.org>; March 2013
4. Institute of Medicine. Dietary Reference Intakes. The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. 2006
5. The Cook's Thesaurus. <http://foodsubs.com>; March 2013
6. Houston Methodist Hospital. Iron Deficiency Anemia Nutrition Therapy. <http://houstonmethodist.org>; June 2014

Tips for Adding Iron to Your Eating Plan

- Eat lean meat, fish and poultry regularly - at least three times per week
- Eat enriched grain products and fortified cereals
- Add dried beans, peas and lentils along with vegetables high in vitamin C to soups and casseroles
- Add dried fruits to cereals and salads (for example add raisins to oatmeal or dried cranberries to salads)
- Add dried fruits in baking
- Sprinkle wheat germ on cereal or use in baking or preparing casseroles
- Eat beef, poultry, fish and veal as sources of heme iron
- Eat citrus, berries, cabbage, tomatoes and peppers as sources of non-heme iron and Vitamin C
- Eat raisins, beans and liver as a source of Folate
- Eat green vegetables, such as broccoli and spinach as sources of non-heme iron and Vitamin B
- If recommended by your doctor, vitamin and iron supplements may help replenish your iron stores more quickly than dietary iron alone
- Limit your intake of dairy products such as cheese, yogurt or milk
- Limit your intake of eggs, whole-grain breads and cereals, baked goods or candy bars
- Limit your intake of tea, coffee, wine, beer or soft drinks
- Limit your intake of canned or processed foods containing EDTA

Your Blood. Their Hope.®



MILLER-KEYSTONE
BLOOD CENTER