

IRON



The body needs iron to carry oxygen through your bloodstream to give you energy. If you don't have enough iron in your diet you may feel weak or fatigued, because oxygen cannot reach your tissues and organs at the rate you demand energy.

Iron is one of the most investigated and best understood nutrients. Yet, it remains one of the most common nutritional deficiencies in the world.

Two Types of Iron:

✓ **Heme iron** is found in meat, poultry, and fish. Heme iron is easier for your body to absorb than non-heme iron.



✓ **Non-heme iron** is found in non-animal foods, such as enriched breads, vegetables, and nuts. Non-heme iron is more easily absorbed when it is consumed with vitamin C, fruit juice, in-between meals, or iron from animal sources. Some foods, such as calcium, bran, coffee, milk, and tea, can hinder iron absorption when consumed at the same time as the iron rich food or when consumed in large quantities.



How much iron do I need?

Recommended daily amount (RDA) of iron:

Men: 10 mg

Women: 15 mg

Iron Deficiency:

Only about 10-15% of the iron consumed is actually absorbed. The RDA accounts for the low rate of absorption, but there are still cases of iron deficiency anemia resulting from poor intake, iron intake accompanied by an absorption inhibitor, or increased need for iron due to vigorous activity levels or pregnancy.

Signs of Iron Deficiency:

Anemia, fatigue, paleness of the skin, decreased immunity, and decreased intellectual performance.

Iron Toxicity:

Iron poisoning can occur if large amounts are ingested in a short period of time. Iron toxicity can cause damage to organs, and even death in young children.

Common Sources of Iron

Food	Serving Size	Iron Content (mg.)
Heme Iron Sources		
Beef Liver	3 oz.	5.8
Lean Sirloin	3 oz.	2.9
Lean Broiled Ground Beef	3 oz.	1.8
Skinless Chicken Breast (Dark)	3 oz.	1.1
Skinless Chicken Breast (Light)	3 oz.	1.0
Pork, Lean, Roasted	3 oz.	1.0
Salmon, canned with bone	3 oz.	0.8
Non-Heme Iron Sources		
Fortified Cereal	1 cup	4.5-18
Pumpkin Seeds	1 oz.	4.25
Soybean Nuts	1/2 cup	4.0
Black Strap Molasses	1 tablespoon	3.5
Bran	1/2 cup	3.5
Boiled Spinach	1/2 cup	3.2
Red Kidney Beans	1/2 cup	2.6

What about iron supplements?

While it is preferable to meet iron requirements through dietary intake, there are cases where it may be necessary to supplement. It is important to speak to your healthcare provider before beginning an iron supplement regimen to assure that supplements are needed and to decrease your risk of iron toxicity. If there has been a deficiency diagnosed, supplements can be in pill or liquid form. Iron supplements can cause nausea, when taken on an empty stomach, and/or constipation.