



Guidelines for Increasing Iron in Your Diet

Why is it important to have adequate iron levels?

Iron is necessary for building red blood cells and is required for producing energy. Iron deficiency can result in fatigue, weakness, poor exercise tolerance, loss of appetite and/or decreased immunity.

How much iron do I need?

Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs)

Males	9-13 years	8 mg/day
	14-18 years	11 mg/day
	19-70+ years	8mg/day
Females	9-13 years	8 mg/day
	14-18 years	15 mg/day
	19-50 years	18 mg/day
	50-70+	8 mg/day
Pregnancy	any age	27/ mg day

What are the dietary guidelines for increasing iron intake?

- **Increase consumption of heme iron** – Heme iron is the most easily absorbed form of iron. Good sources of heme iron are: Red meat, dark meat poultry (legs and thighs), liver and fish.
- **Take vitamin C with your source of iron** - Vitamin C increases iron absorption. Four ounces (1/2 cup) of vitamin C containing juice is enough to increase iron absorption. Other sources of vitamin C include citrus fruit, fresh bell peppers, strawberries, and fresh broccoli. However, do not take high doses of vitamin C with iron.
- **Fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, rice, egg yolks and beans** contain non-heme iron, which is more difficult to absorb than heme iron. Include a source of vitamin C with these foods to maximize absorption.
- **If possible, avoid drinking coffee, tea or red wines with your meals or iron supplements if your doctor prescribed one. Instead enjoy these beverages between meals.** These beverages contain tannins, polyphenols and phytates which inhibit the absorption of iron. In addition, eating high-fiber foods or supplemental calcium at during the same meal as an iron source can decrease iron absorption.
- **Choose a multivitamin that contains iron.** Be sure to read the label or check with your pharmacist, doctor, &/or nutritionist regarding which type and amount of vitamin supplement is best for you. **Do not take iron supplements unless recommended by your doctor.** Too much iron can lead to health problems.

Addition information about iron:

Medline <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002422.htm>

Vegetarian Resource Group <http://www.vrg.org/nutrition/iron.htm>