How to Increase Iron in Your Diet

RDA Iron (mg)		
Age	**Female**	**Male**
9-13	8 mg	8 mg
14-18	15 mg	11 mg
19+	18 mg	8 mg

Iron is vital for making healthy red blood cells. Inadequate red blood cells is called anemia and is associated with fatigue and dizziness. Low ferritin (iron stores) can cause health problems even without anemia. People at risk of insufficient or deficient ferritin/iron include: those with inadequate dietary intake (or very picky eaters), vegan diet, heavy periods, celiac disease and other chronic medical conditions.

Foods Rich in Iron

			Iron (mg)
Grains	Total (cereal)	¾ cup	18
	Mini-Wheats (cereal)	1 cup	18
	Cream of Wheat	½ cup	8
	Other fortified cereals	¾ cup	5-8
Protein	Pork	4 oz	5
	Beef	4 oz	4
	Scallops	4 oz	4
	Chicken	4 oz	2
	Eggs	2	2
	Beans, cooked -red, kidney, pinto	1 cup	5
	Beans, cooked - lentils	1 cup	3
	Nuts - almonds, peanuts, walnuts	4 oz	3
	Peanut butter	4 TBS	2
Fruit	Figs	5 med	3
	Raisins	½ cup	2.5
	Dried peaches	¼ cup	2
	Watermelon	2 cups	1
Vegetables	Spinach, cooked	½ cup	5

Foods with Very Little Iron

- Whole wheat bread and tortillas
- Most fruits and vegetables except as noted
- Milk and other dairy products (cheese, yogurt, ice cream)

Iron from plant foods is not well-absorbed

- The iron in meat, fish and eggs is easily absorbed and utilized by the body.
- Plant and vegetables sources of iron are best eaten with vitamin C to enhance the absorption.
- Vegan/vegetarians need to consume twice as much iron to meet their daily requirement because it is harder to absorb plant-based iron.

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Ferritin/Iron Lab Results for:

❍ **Normal**	1. Continue eating a balanced diet including your Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iron.
❍**Borderline**	1. Take iron supplement **once** per day for **3** months . 2. Eat a balanced diet including your Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iron. 3. Repeat test in 12 months
❍ **Deficient without Anemia**	1. Take iron supplement **twice** per day for **2** months 2. Eat a balanced diet including your Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iron 3. Repeat test in **6** months.
❍**Deficient WITH Anemia**	1. Eat a balanced diet including your Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iron. 2. Take iron supplement **twice** per day for **3** months 3. Repeat test in **3** months.

Take an Iron Supplement as directed

Preferred *Iron Supplement (Usually available over-the-counter)*

- Ferrous Fumarate: 1 tablet = 324 total mg = 106 mg of elemental iron
- *Please contact our office if your pharmacy or insurance requires a prescription.*

Alternative *Iron Supplements*

- Ferrous Sulfate: 1 tablet = 325 total mg = 65 mg of elemental iron
- Multivitamin for Women (Centrum, One-a-Day): 1 tablet = 18 mg of elemental iron
- Avoid slow release iron supplements because they are not well-absorbed.

How to optimize absorption of the iron in the supplement:

- Ideally, take 15 minutes before a meal
- Take with vitamin C such as orange juice (*not* calcium enriched) or a vitamin C supplement.
- Do not take with calcium. Calcium inhibits the absorption of iron; if needed, take supplements at different times.
- If taking antacids, take the supplement either 2 hours before or 4 hours after taking the antacid.

What to do if you have…

- Nausea
  - Take with food (not before the meal) and avoid dairy/calcium
  - Take with ascorbic acid/Vitamin C
- Constipation
  - Eat a fiber rich diet including fresh fruit and raw vegetables
  - Drink plenty of fluids
- Difficulty taking the prescription twice per day
  - Take once per day over an extended period of time.
- Darkening of stools or change in stool texture
  - Not a concern and does not require any action.