

Choosing Foods with Iron

Iron in our bodies...

Why do we need it?

Iron is a mineral that is found in all the cells in our bodies. It is an important part of red blood cells, which carry oxygen to all the parts in our bodies. Iron is needed to help our bodies fight infections and for brain cells to work well.



Eating foods high in iron may help...

- you have more energy
- you fight infections
- your children grow
- your children learn better
- your baby grow well when you are pregnant

Food Sources of Iron...

- meat, especially beef
- shrimp, fish
- tofu
- turkey, chicken
- lima beans, sweet peas
- liver
- greens
- pinto beans, lentils, chickpeas, baked beans
- whole grain or enriched bread and pasta
- pumpkin seeds, pistachios, peanuts
- iron-fortified cereals, including hot cereals and grits



Blood Test Today: _____

My Goal: _____

Date: _____

Reading the food label...

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (110g)	
Servings Per Container About 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 3g	16%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 4mg	2%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 30g	10%
Dietary Fiber 3g	14%
Sugars 2g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	7%
Vitamin C	15%
Calcium	20%
Iron	32%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 5g 7g
Saturated Fat	Less than 10g 12g
Cholesterol	Less than 1,500mg 1,700mg
Total Carbohydrate	250mg 300mg
Dietary Fiber	22mg 31mg

Percent Daily Value...

- Look for the Percent Daily Value (%DV) on the Nutrition Facts label on food.
- Look for **iron** and the percentage next to it.
- A food is considered a **good source** of iron if the number is between 10% and 19%.
- If the number is more than 20%, then it is considered an **excellent** source of iron.

Caution: Keep iron pills, including prenatal vitamins and multivitamins, away from children.

WIC foods with Iron

To increase iron...

- Combine foods high in iron with foods high in vitamin C. Foods that contain vitamin C, such as orange juice, citrus fruits, or tomato sauce, help your body use iron.
- Cook with a cast iron skillet or pan. This can add some iron to foods.
- Don't drink coffee or tea with meals high in iron. They contain compounds called tannins, which make it hard for your body to use iron.
- Take your iron pills or prenatal vitamins with water or juice, not milk. Calcium can make it hard for your body to absorb iron.



- Visit the Farmers' Market to buy fresh fruits and vegetables high in vitamin C such as strawberries, green and red peppers, and broccoli. Combine these with good iron sources such as beef, lentils and fortified cereals.

What will I do to reach my goal?

- I will include red meat, chicken or turkey in three meals a week.
- I will include iron-fortified cereals and bread products as part of my daily food choices.
- I will drink a 4 to 6 oz. glass of a 100% fruit juice with a bowl of WIC cereal 4 days a week.
- I will create combination meals/snacks that include a good source of iron and good source of vitamin C.
- I will ask my doctor about taking an iron pill or a vitamin supplement.
- I will _____



How can I use my WIC foods to get more iron?

- Eat a bowl of iron-fortified cereal each day.
- Drink vitamin C-rich juice with a food that is listed as a good source of iron.
- Use dried beans in soups, salads or salsas.



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Division of Public Health
Nutrition Services Branch

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