

Strong as Iron

Iron is an important mineral that helps maintain healthy blood. A lack of iron is called anemia, which affects 4-5 million Americans yearly. Anemia causes extreme fatigue and light headedness. It affects all ages, especially children, and women who are pregnant or menstruating.

Iron is needed in your diet because it:

- Carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body
- Is important for healthy brain development and growth in children
- Gives your body the energy it needs to work and play

Women, children, and infants who have low iron levels:

- May feel weak and tired more often
- May feel lightheaded and confused
- May be sensitive to cold
- May feel short of breath
- May have pale skin
- May have hair loss and/or brittle nails
- May crave dirt, clay, ice, or other non-food items
- May have a poor appetite



Where to get iron? Iron comes from the foods you eat. The best iron-rich foods for babies include:

- Breastmilk
- Iron-fortified formula
- Iron-fortified baby cereal
- Baby food meats or pureed meats

Good sources of iron for women and children are:

- Beef
- Beef liver and chicken liver
- Poultry (chicken and turkey)
- Canned light tuna
- Iron-enriched cereals (like WIC cereals) and breads
- Dark green, leafy vegetables (mustard, collard and turnip greens, kale, and spinach)
- Beans (black, kidney, pinto, lima, and navy)

Some foods and drinks keep your body from using iron. If your iron is low, you may want to avoid eating or drinking:

- Tea
- Cola beverages
- Coffee
- Too much chocolate including hot chocolate
- Too much calcium (too much milk)

Don't eat non-foods. Some items that aren't foods will keep your body from using the iron in the foods you eat.

Avoid eating:

- Ice
- Clay
- Flour
- Starch
- Dirt

The body uses iron from meat and chicken better than iron from beans, grain products, and other foods. However, vitamin C helps the body use iron. The foods you serve your family make a difference. Try these high iron combos:

Foods with Iron	+	Foods with Vitamin C
WIC breakfast cereal	and	Berries or 100% fruit juice
Peanut butter sandwich	and	Apple slices, tangerine slices, or bananas
Kidney beans in chili	with	Tomato sauce
Hard-boiled eggs	and	Melon slices or 100% fruit juice
Chicken and rice stir fry	with	Broccoli, carrots or green peas
Spinach or kale salad	with	Berries or bell peppers and tomatoes

Sickle Cell Anemia

People with sickle cell anemia need iron. Iron will not prevent sickle cell anemia, but normal growth and development depend on iron. Foods rich in iron are good for people with sickle cell anemia.

Lead Poisoning

Iron is an important mineral that helps maintain healthy blood. A lack of iron is called anemia, which affects 4-5 million Americans yearly. Anemia causes extreme fatigue and light headedness. It affects all ages, with children and women who are pregnant or menstruating among those at highest risk for this condition.



Helpful Hints:

- The iron in vegetables is absorbed better when eaten with meat.
- The iron absorption of all foods is improved when eaten with foods high in vitamin C. Foods high in vitamin C include oranges, lemons, grapefruits, tangerines, tomatoes, potatoes, kiwi fruit, cabbage, pineapple, strawberries, greens, cantaloupe and peppers.
- Iron-fortified cereals and breads, including infant cereal, can be added to meat patties or meat loaf to add extra iron.
- If you or your child is prescribed iron, be sure it is taken daily. Taking iron with fruit juice increases the body's iron absorption. Do not take iron with tea or colas.
- Cook in a cast-iron skillet. Using iron cookware transfers some of the iron into your food.

To learn more about your WIC, call your local WIC clinic or 1-800-545-6747.

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