



Dietary Iron

Everyone needs iron. Iron is a mineral which is part of every cell in the body. Most iron is in red blood cells and helps carry oxygen throughout the body.

Low iron intake over a long time may lead to low stores of iron or iron deficiency anemia. You may feel weak or short of breath, have poor appetite, and may get sick more often and look pale. These symptoms will go away after iron stores are rebuilt. The amount of iron you store depends on the foods you eat and your body's needs for iron.

Listed below are guidelines for how many milligrams of iron per day men and women should have:

Age in Years	Men	Women
1-3	7 mg	7 mg
4-8	10 mg	10 mg
9-13	8 mg	8 mg
14-18	11 mg	15 mg
19-30	8 mg	18 mg
31-50	8 mg	18 mg
51+	8 mg	8 mg

The following suggestions will help you enhance iron absorption.

- Lean red meats are the best source of "heme" iron, the most readily-absorbed form.
- Choose breads, cereals, and pasta labeled "enriched" or "fortified".
- Try to include foods high in Vitamin C at most meals since this helps the body absorb iron. For example, if you drink a glass of orange juice with your iron-enriched breakfast cereal, you'll double or triple the iron you absorb. Good sources of Vitamin C include strawberries, tomatoes, melons, broccoli, cabbage, and citrus fruits and juices such as orange or grapefruit.
- Iron in vegetables, fruits, and grains are better absorbed when eaten with meat and fish.
 - Combine - beans and ground beef in chili
 - peppers and chicken
 - spaghetti and meatballs
 - bean and beef burritos

CHIEF SOURCES (Greater than 4 Milligrams) Average Serving

Food	(approximate measure)	Iron (mg)
Bran Buds [®] or All Bran [®] - type cereals, dry	1/2 cup	6.7
Bran flakes, dry	1/2 cup	5.5
Carob stars or chips	1/2 cup	20.1
Cereals, fortified with 100% of the U.S. RDA for iron	1 oz.	18.0
Cornmeal, dry	1 cup	5.9
Cream of wheat, Ralston [®] , farina, Malt-O-Meal [®] (cooked)	1 cup	10.0
Duck, wild, with or without skin	3 oz.	7.1
Liver, beef (cooked)*	3 oz.	5.7
Liver, chicken (cooked)*	3 oz.	7.2
Liver, calf (cooked)*	3 oz.	12.0
Pheasant, with or without skin	3 oz.	7.1
Venison, rabbit, squirrel, moose, elk (cooked)	3 oz.	6.6

MODERATE SOURCES (2 to 4 Milligrams)

Food	Average Serving (approximate measure)	Iron (mg)
Almonds, dried, unblanched	1/2 cup	2.6
Apricots, dried	1/2 cup	3.0
Asparagus, canned, drained solids	1/2 cup	2.2
Dried beans:		
Baked beans, no pork	1/2 cup	2.2
Northern, navy, red, or dry beans (cooked)	1/2 cup	2.4
Soybeans (cooked)	1/2 cup	2.4
Beef, cooked (varies with cut of meat)	3 oz.	2.2
Figs, dried	1/2 cup	2.2
Oatmeal, dry	1 cup	3.6
Peaches, dried	1/2 cup	3.2
Prunes, dried (uncooked)	1 cup	4.0
Salmon, canned	1/2 cup	2.1
Sardines, canned and drained	8 medium	2.8
Scallops	3 oz.	2.5
Veal, cooked (varies with cut)	3 oz.	3.0

MINOR SOURCES (Less than 2 Milligrams)

Food	Average Serving (approximate measure)	Iron (mg)
Bread, whole wheat	2 slices	1.4
Chard, Swiss (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.9
Chicken, with or without skin (cooked)	3 oz.	1.5
Dates, dried	1/2 cup	1.0
Dried beans and peas:		
Green peas (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.2
Lentils, split peas (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.7
Lima beans, Fordhook (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.1
Egg, large*	1	1.0
Greens, beet, mustard, or turnip (cooked)	1/2 cup	0.5
Lamb (cooked)	3 oz.	1.2
Macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, white, enriched (cooked)	1/2 cup	0.7
Molasses, blackstrap	1 tsp.	1.6
Muffin, English, whole wheat	1 whole	1.3
Oat bran (cooked)	1/2 cup	0.9
Peanuts, roasted without shells	1/2 cup	1.3
Pork, cooked, smoked, or fresh (varies with cut of meat)	3 oz.	1.2
Prune juice	1/2 cup	1.5
Raisins, dried (seedless)	1/4 cup	0.8
Rice, long grain or instant	1/2 cup	0.9
Rice, wild (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.1
Spinach, frozen (cooked)	1/2 cup	1.4
Spinach, raw	1 cup	1.5
Tomato juice, canned	1 cup	1.4
Turkey, with or without skin, dark meat (cooked)	3 oz.	1.5

*These foods contain 250 or more of cholesterol in the portion listed.