



Iron Deficiency Anemia

Iron deficiency is the most common nutrient deficiency in the world. About 20% of women, 50% of pregnant women, and 3% of men do not have enough iron in their body. It can also be a problem for athletes, and particularly runners.

Our bodies need iron because:

- Iron is a component of hemoglobin, which transports oxygen in the blood
- Iron is a component of myoglobin, which makes oxygen available for muscle contraction
- Iron helps the body utilize energy

Iron Requirements

Gender	Age Range	Iron Requirement (mg/day)
Males	9–13	8
	14–18	11
	19–70+	8
Females	9–13	8
	14–18	15
	19–50	18
	>50	8
	Pregnancy (all ages)	27
	Lactation (≥19 years)	9

mg = milligrams

Factors That Influence Iron Absorption

The type of iron influences absorption. Iron from animal foods (i.e. heme iron), such as meats, poultry, fish, and shellfish is absorbed about three to five times more efficiently than iron from plants foods (i.e. non-heme iron).

Vitamin C found in citrus fruits, such as oranges (orange juice), strawberries and other citrus fruits will help enhance non-heme iron absorption. Vitamin C can also be found in vegetables such as broccoli, peppers, Brussels sprouts, tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes, and leafy green vegetables like turnip greens and spinach. Combining these Vitamin-C rich foods with iron-rich foods (on next page) will improve the absorption of iron, both non-heme and heme iron.



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Iron-Rich Foods

Fish and shellfish:

- Tuna
- Salmon
- Oysters
- Clams
- Shrimp

Lean meats:

- Beef
- Pork
- Lamb

Poultry:

- Chicken
- Turkey

Organ meat:

- Beef liver

Beans and legumes:

- Kidney
- Black
- Soy
- Pinto
- Navy
- Garbanzo (chickpeas)
- Lentils

Tofu and soy-based meat alternatives:

Greens:

- Spinach
- Kale
- Mustard, collard, and turnip greens

Vegetables:

- Broccoli
- Asparagus
- Parsley
- Brussels sprouts
- Potatoes
- Peas

Dried fruits:

- Raisins
- Dates
- Prunes
- Apricots

Iron-fortified whole grains:

- Cereals
- Breads
- Tortillas
- Rice
- Pasta

Blackstrap molasses

Egg yolks

Nuts