

Foods Rich in Iron

Are some foods with iron better than others? (taken from

<http://www.redcrossblood.org/learn-about-blood/health-and-wellness/iron-rich-foods>)

Food has two types of iron — heme iron and non-heme iron. Heme iron is found in meat, fish and poultry, and is the form of iron that is most readily absorbed from your stomach and taken up into your body after you eat it. Non-heme iron is found in plant foods as well as meat. Foods with non-heme iron are still good to eat, but the iron contained in these foods won't be absorbed as completely as heme iron. You absorb up to 30 percent of heme iron, found only in animal tissues (meat, poultry, and fish). You absorb 2-10 percent of non-heme iron, found in plant foods as well as meat. Eating meat generally boosts your iron levels far more than eating non-heme iron. When you eat heme iron with other sources of non-heme iron, the iron is more completely absorbed. Foods high in vitamin C, like tomatoes, citrus fruits and red, yellow and orange peppers can also help with the absorption of non-heme iron.

Iron-Rich Foods (taken from <http://www.webmd.com/diet/iron-rich-foods>)

Very good sources of heme iron, with 3.5 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of beef or chicken liver
- 3 ounces of clams, mollusks, or mussels
- 3 ounces of oysters

Good sources of heme iron, with 2.1 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of cooked beef
- 3 ounces of canned sardines, canned in oil
- 3 ounces of cooked turkey

Other sources of heme iron, with 0.7 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of chicken
- 3 ounces of halibut, haddock, perch, salmon, or tuna
- 3 ounces of ham
- 3 ounces of veal

Top 12 Non-Animal Sources of Iron (taken from <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/12-top-vegan-iron-sources.html>)

Tofu (1/2 cup): 6.6 mg

Spirulina (1 tsp): 5 mg

Cooked soybeans (1/2 cup): 4.4 mg

Pumpkin seeds (1 ounce): 4.2 mg

Quinoa (4 ounces): 4 mg

Blackstrap molasses (1 tbs): 4 mg

Tomato paste (4 ounces): 3.9 mg

White beans (1/2 cup) 3.9 mg

Dried apricots (1 cup): 3.5 mg

Cooked spinach (1/2 cup): 3.2 mg

Dried peaches (6 halves): 3.1 mg

Prune juice (8 ounces): 3 mg

Lentils (4 ounces): 3 mg

Peas (1 cup): 2.1 mg

Tips to get the most iron out of your food: (<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/12-top-vegan-iron-sources.html>)

- Eat iron-rich foods along with foods that contain vitamin C, which helps the body absorb the iron.
- Tea and coffee contains compounds called polyphenols, which can bind with iron making it harder for our bodies to absorb it.

- Calcium also hinders the absorption of iron; avoid high-calcium foods for a half hour before or after eating iron-rich foods.
- Cook in iron pots. The acid in foods seems to pull some of the iron out of the cast-iron pots. Simmering acidic foods, such as tomato sauce, in an iron pot can increase the iron content of the brew more than ten-fold. Cooking foods containing other acids, such as vinegar, red wine, lemon or lime juice, in an iron pot can also increase the iron content of the final mixture.

How much iron do I need? (taken from <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/vitamins/iron.html>)

If you have already been diagnosed with iron deficiency, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about treatment. For healthy individuals, the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for iron is listed in the following table.

Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for iron by age and sex.		
Age/Group	Life Stage	Iron (mg/day)
Infants	0–6 months	0.27*
	7–12 months	11
Children	1–3 years	7
	4–8 years	10
Males	9–13 years	8
	14–18 years	11
	19–30 years	8
	31–50 years	8
	51–70 years	8
	>70 years	8
Females	9–13 years	8
	14–18 years	15
	19–30 years	18
	31–50 years	18
	51–70 years	8
	>70 years	8
Pregnant Women	14–18 years	27
	19–30 years	27
	31–50 years	27
Lactating Women	14–18 years	10
	19–30 years	9
	31–50 years	9

*This value is an Adequate Intake (AI) value. AI is used when there is not enough information known to set a Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA).

Source: [Dietary Reference Intakes, Institute of Medicine, Food and Nutrition Board](#)