

The Importance of Iron

What is iron?

Iron is an essential mineral that exists in every single living cell. Its primary role is to help red blood cells carry oxygen to the rest of the body. It is also needed to make important substances needed by the body, like amino acids, hormones, and to make new cells.

What happens when you don't get enough iron?

Iron stores are very limited, and when you don't take in enough iron from foods, they can be used up. An iron deficiency does not necessarily mean you have anemia, but the difference is really small. Even long before anemia sets in, you will start to notice a difference in the way you feel. Symptoms include:

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| Tiredness | Poor academic and/or sports performance |
| Apathy | Poor concentration |
| Tendency to feel cold | Irritability |

The good news... all of these symptoms will disappear when your iron intake improves.

How much iron do you need?

Male teens need 11 mg each day.

Female teens need 15 mg. Girls need higher amounts because of blood lost during menstruation.

Where do you find iron?

Iron is found in both plant and animal foods.

Animal sources:

Meat
Poultry
Fish

Plant sources:

Raisins
Green leafy vegetables
Lentils and beans
Soy foods
Iron-fortified cereals, grains, and flours

How to find the best sources of iron:

Check the nutrition facts label. If it has 10% or more of your daily value of iron, then it is considered a good source. If it has 20% or more, then it is an excellent source!

And, here's a trick to help your body absorb more iron: have a Vitamin C-rich piece of fruit, like an orange, with your meal. Vitamin C aids in iron absorption!

Should I take an iron supplement?

Because iron can be toxic in high doses, never take a supplement without speaking with your doctor.

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