

# 3 Steps To An Iron-Rich Diet

1

Choose foods high in absorbable iron at each meal and create food combinations to enhance absorption:

- a good source of iron is lean red meat
- for non-meat meals, choose iron-rich foods such as legumes (lentils, baked beans or 3-bean mix)
- combine non-meat sources of iron with good sources of vitamin C
- consider commercially available foods with added iron (fortified) such as breakfast cereals

2

Drink tea, coffee and milk between meals, not with meals

3

Consider iron rich snacks such as raisins, nuts, dates, prunes and figs



Iron Rich Foods			
	FOOD	AMOUNT	AVG. MG. IRON
GRAINS	Wheat germ	1/2 cup	4
	English muffin	1	1.5–1.9
	Bran muffin	1	1.5
	Tortillas	1	1
	Cooked cereal	1/2 cup	0.7
	Bread (white or whole wheat)	1 slice	0.5
	Dry cereal	3/4 cup	read label
MEAT	Liver	3 oz.	8–9
	Organ meats	3 oz.	7
	Liver sausage	3 oz.	4–6
	Shellfish	3 oz.	4–5
	Red meats	3 oz.	4
	Fish and poultry	3 oz.	2–3
MEAT SUBSTITUTES	Pumpkin seeds	1 oz.	3.2
	Tofu	4 oz.	2.3
	Cooked dry peas (beans, lentils, lima beans)	1/2 cup	2–3
	Sunflower seeds	1 oz.	2
	Nuts	1/3 cup	0.5–2.0
	Egg	1	1
	Peanut butter	1 tbsp.	0.3
FRUITS & JUICES	Prune juice	3/4 cup	7.4
	Raisins, dates, prunes	1/2 cup	3–4
	Figs, Apricots	1/2 cup	3–4
	Watermelon	6" x 1/2" slice	3
	Tomato juice	3/4 cup	1.6
	Strawberries	1 cup	1.5
	Apple juice	3/4 cup	1.1
VEGETABLES	Banana	1 cup	1
	Cooked dark leafy greens (spinach, collards, kale)	1/2 cup	3
	Raw dark leafy greens (spinach, collards, kale)	1 cup	2
	Jicama	1/3 cup	0.8
FAST FOODS	Pizza (cheese or pepperoni)	1/2 of 10"	4.5–5.4
	Beef burrito	1	4.6
	Beef taco	1	2.9
	Bean burrito	1	2.8
	Hamburger	1 reg.	2.5
	Cheeseburger	1 reg.	2.5



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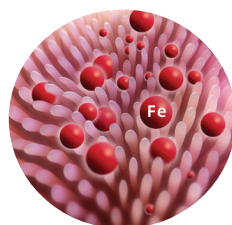


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## What is hemoglobin?

Hemoglobin is an iron-containing protein in red blood cells.

Hemoglobin carries oxygen around the body and without enough of it your muscles and organs don't get all the oxygen they need.



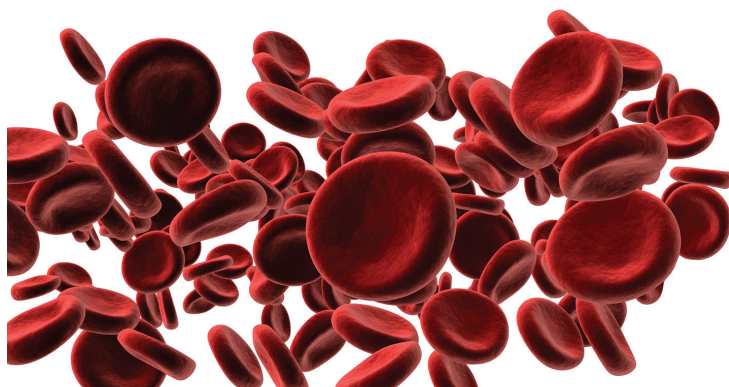
## What is iron and where do I get it?

Iron is a mineral nutrient that your body needs to function normally. It is a vital part of hemoglobin. Your body obtains iron from the diet, absorbing about 1-2 mg per day.

Iron is mainly used for making new red cells. The remaining iron is stored and used at times when there is an increased need for iron such as with growth, in pregnancy or blood loss. The term iron deficiency is used when these stores have been used up.

## Is it possible to have normal hemoglobin but low iron?

Yes. This is because in early iron deficiency there is often enough iron circulating in your red cells to keep your hemoglobin level normal.



## How does blood donation affect iron and hemoglobin?

Blood donation removes red cells which contain hemoglobin and iron. With good iron stores and dietary iron absorption, hemoglobin and iron can be restored before the next donation in most cases.

- Donors who have reduced dietary iron absorption, increased needs or other iron losses such as non-donation blood loss (e.g. heavy menstruation in females), may take longer to restore their levels.
- The hemoglobin screening test performed at the next donation ensures the hemoglobin is within the acceptable range for donation.



## How much iron do I lose when I donate blood?

You lose about 220-250 mg of iron each time you donate a unit of blood. A double red cell donation causes you to lose about twice as much (about 470 mg of iron). The time it takes to replenish the iron lost with blood donation depends on how much iron your body has before donation and whether you take a supplement or multivitamin containing iron.

## How will low iron levels affect me?

Many people with low iron levels feel fine and have no symptoms, but low iron levels may cause anemia, tiredness, irritability, reduced endurance during exercise or everyday activities and difficulty concentrating.

## What Can I do to maintain my iron levels?

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet containing foods high in vitamin C and rich in iron.
- Take a multivitamin with iron to replace the iron lost through blood donation.
- Be sure to discuss taking iron supplementation with your health-care provider before starting on it.
- For frequent donors, about 18mg of iron per day for 60 days has been shown to replace the iron lost in a whole blood donation, which helps to prevent donation-associated iron deficiency and maintain hemoglobin levels. This is the amount of iron in a typical multivitamin containing iron.
- Do not take more than the dosage recommended by your health-care provider as high dosages may be harmful.

