

# Iron-Rich Foods

## What is iron and what does it do for our health and well-being?

- Iron is responsible for making hemoglobin, a protein in our red blood cells that carries oxygen from our lungs to several organs throughout the body.
- Iron is responsible for making myoglobin, another protein in our blood, that feeds our muscles with oxygen.
- Iron makes several hormones and is stored in the liver, spleen, muscle tissue, and bone marrow.
- **Bonus:** Red blood cells go through hematopoiesis (which needs iron, vitamin B12, and folate) to produce healthy new cells.

### LOCATION

Hemoglobin

Myoglobin

Hormones

Storage

### IRON (%)

65%

10%

1-5%

20%

## What is Iron-Deficiency Anemia?

- Too few healthy red blood cells in the body, which causes levels of stored iron to become too low. Iron deficiency anemia is defined as hemoglobin levels <14 g/dL for men and <12 g/dL for women.
- **Causes:** Poor nutrition, blood loss, disease conditions, absorption complications, vegan/vegetarian diets.
- **Signs & Symptoms:** Extreme fatigue, weakness, pale skin, chest pain, cold hands & feet, brittle nails, etc.
- **Diet & Supplements:** Iron rich foods should be the first choice, but supplements are also available. Your health provider can help you find an individualized regimen.

## How much iron do I need in a day?

Adults 51 years and older: 8 mg per day

Women who are menstruating: 18 mg per day

Upper Limit (when toxicity is at risk): 45 mg per day

## 35 Iron-Rich Foods

### & 10 High Vitamin C Foods for Absorption

Iron is an essential nutrient that we need for development, everyday activities, and for keeping up with life throughout our older adult years.

### Heme Iron Foods

(animal sources)

1. Pork liver
2. Beef liver
3. Oysters
4. Mussels
5. Chicken liver
6. Beef
7. Clams
8. Sardines, canned
9. Duck
10. Tuna, canned
11. Chicken
12. Salmon, canned
13. Turkey



### Non-heme Iron Foods

(plant sources)

1. Iron-fortified cereal
2. Tofu
3. Oats
4. Lentils
5. Quinoa
6. Black beans
7. Pumpkin seeds, w/o shell
8. Chia seeds
9. Flax seeds
10. White beans
11. Kidney beans
12. Chickpeas
13. Sesame seeds
14. Whole grain bread
15. Pistachios
16. Molasses
17. Sweet potato, w/ skin
18. Broccoli
19. Figs, dried
20. Apricots, dried
21. Raisins
22. Spinach



### Vitamin C Foods

1. Broccoli
2. Grapefruit
3. Kiwi
4. Leafy greens
5. Melons
6. Oranges (orange juice)
7. Bell peppers
8. Strawberries
9. Tangerines
10. Tomatoes



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