

## **Foods High in Iron**

Iron is very important because it helps your body to make haemoglobin. Haemoglobin, or 'Hb', is the protein found in red blood cells that carries oxygen around your body and gives blood its red colour. If you have low iron stores or iron deficiency anaemia, this may be due to low amounts of iron in your diet or may be due to other causes, for example pregnancy or illness.

You may feel tired and have a poor appetite at the moment. However, if you have been given iron supplements you should gradually feel better. This diet sheet gives you ideas of good iron choices and how to boost your iron stores and prevent anaemia or stop it returning.

If you have not been prescribed iron supplements this information will help you increase your food intake of iron. If you continue to feel unwell you should see your GP or consultant again.

## **Symptoms**

Many people with iron deficiency anaemia will only display a few signs or symptoms of the illness. The most common symptoms include:

- Tiredness
- Lethargy
- Shortness of breath

You may also notice changes in your physical appearance. For example, signs you may have iron deficiency anaemia include:

- A pale complexion
- An abnormally smooth tongue
- Painful ulcers on the corners of your mouth
- Dry, flaking nails

## **Cause of**

Low iron occurs when there isn't enough iron in the body. There are many conditions that can lead to a lack of iron. In men, and post-menopausal women the most common cause is bleeding in the stomach and intestines. This can be caused by:

- Specific medication such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

- Peptic ulcer
- Stomach or bowel cancer

In women of reproductive age, the most common causes of iron deficiency anaemia are:

- Pregnancy – because your body needs extra iron for your baby
- Heavy periods

## **Treatment**

Having a diet that is high in iron is very important for treatment. There are two types of iron:  
**Heme and Non-heme**

**Heme iron** is found in meat, chicken and fish and it is easier for your body to absorb

**Non-heme iron** is found in beans, lentils, soybeans, spinach, oatmeal, tofu and raisins. It is not as easily absorbed, but foods containing it are still good sources of iron.

Some foods help your body absorb iron, while others slow down the rate at which your body absorbs it. You can help increase iron absorption by:

Having vitamin C such as citrus fruit or fruit juice with your meals

Stir-frying vegetables quickly which preserves their vitamin C content

Choosing products that are fortified with vitamin C, e.g. some fruit squashes, dried mashed potato

Avoid drinking tea with your meals as “Tannins” found in tea decrease iron absorption

Adding bran to your foods will also reduce absorption

## Dietary – Foods containing Iron

### Animal Sources

<b>Excellent Sources</b>	<b>Iron (mg) per Portion</b>
80 g Black pudding (2 slices)	9.8
125 g Liver (lamb) uncooked (pack of cards)	9.4
100 g Partridge uncooked (pack of cards)	7.7
100 g Pigeon uncooked (pack of cards)	7.2
125 g Kidney (lamb) uncooked (2)	6.9
120 g Venison uncooked (pack of cards)	4.0
<b>Good Sources</b>	<b>Iron (mg) per Portion</b>
160 g Beef, fillet steak uncooked (hand size)	3.3
40 g Liver pate (matchbox)	2.4

100 g Pheasant uncooked (pack of cards)	2.2
150 g Faggots in gravy (2 golf ball)	2.6
120 g Pilchards in tomato sauce (small can)	3.0
120 g Sardines in tomato sauce (small can)	5.5
160 g Mackerel grilled (medium filleted fish)	1.9
130 g Lamb leg steak (1 medium)	1.8
130 g Kippers grilled (1 medium fillet)	1.4
100 g Rabbit uncooked (pack of cards)	1.0
18g Egg yolk (1 egg)	1.0

<b>Good non - animal sources</b>	<b>Iron (mg) per Portion</b>
80 g Broccoli (2 spears)	3.0
50 g Fresh Spinach (large handful)	2.3
100g Soya Beans (3 tbsp.)	2.0
44 g Shredded Wheat (2)	1.8
85 g Wholemeal Bread ( 2 thick slices)	1.8
3 g Curry Powder (1 level tsp)	1.6
100g Red Kidney Beans (3 tbsp.)	1.5
200g Baked Beans (small tin)	1.5
50 g Muesli (3-4 tbsp.)	1.4
50 g Watercress (handful)	1.0
100 g Brown Pasta (3 tbsp.)	1.0
100 g Brown Rice (3 tbsp.)	0.4
25 g Liquorice shapes * (8 sweets)	4.2
45 g Dried Peaches (4)	3.1

45 g Prunes (5)	2.3
45 g Dried Apricots (5)	1.8
8 g Treacle * (1 tsp)	1.7
15 g Pumpkin Seeds (1 tbsp.)	1.5
50 g Plain Chocolate * (small bar)	1.2
30 g Bombay mix * (small handful)	1.1
25 g Nuts (small handful)	0.7

\* Eat only occasionally as very high in sugar or fat

### **Iron supplements**

Most people should be able to get all the of the iron the need by eating a varied and balance diet and should not need to take iron supplements. However, if your level is very low, your GP may recommend you take a supplement. These may make you a little constipated so make sure you eat at least five fruit and vegetables and day, chose granary bread and brown rice and pasta, drink 2000ml water a day and keep as active as possible.