

# Iron in your diet

Information and advice for adult patients

## *Nutrition & Dietetics*

### **What is iron?**

Iron is a mineral that is found in a limited number of foods. Iron is needed by our body for healthy blood. It produces red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body.

### **Why is it important to have enough iron in my diet?**

A lack of iron in your diet may cause you to feel tired, lack energy, have a reduced appetite and lack concentration and can result in anaemia.

Vitamin C helps your body to absorb more iron from food so it is also important to include vitamin C containing foods in your diet. See page 7 for more details about vitamin C foods.

### **How much iron do I need in my diet?**

Different groups of people need different amounts of iron in their diet to stay healthy. The iron requirements **per day** are as follows:

#### **Females**

11-18 years	14.8mg
19-50 years	14.8mg
50+ years	8.7mg

#### **Males**

11-18 years	11.3mg
19-50 years	8.7mg
50+ years	8.7mg

#### **Pregnant women**

During pregnancy your body requires more iron than usual. Pregnant women should consume iron-rich foods from the list below but offal, including liver and kidney, should NOT be eaten during pregnancy because they have a high vitamin A content which can harm the baby.

### **What foods contain iron?**

There are two main sources of iron:

- 1. Animal sources:** e.g. red meat, some fish. The animal sources of iron are more easily used by the body.
- 2. Non-animal sources:** e.g. pulses, beans, bread, vegetables.

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### Good sources of iron

Try to include some of these foods each day. Your dietitian will give you more specific advice.

### Iron from animal sources

#### Meat

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Beef (sliced)	45g	1.4mg
Beef (minced)	140g	3.8mg
Corned beef (sliced)	50g	1.2mg
Pork (roast)	90g	1.6mg
Pork (chop)	140g	1mg
Lamb (roast)	90g	1.4mg
Lamb (chop)	70g	1.5mg
Chicken liver	75g	8.5mg
Liver pate	100g	7mg
Liver sausages	100g	6.5mg
Lambs liver	75g	8mg
Black pudding	50g	10mg
Game	75g	8mg
Beef	100g	3mg
Faggots	150g	12.5mg
Sausages	120g	2mg
Bacon	100g	1.5mg
Ox tongue	50g	1.5mg

#### Fish

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Cockles	100g	2.6g
Crab (canned)	100g	3mg
Herring	100g	1mg
Mussels (no shells)	80g	6.5mg
Pilchards	155g	4.5mg
Prawns (boiled)	100g	1mg
Salmon (steamed)	100g	1mg
Sardines (in tomato sauce)	125g	1mg
Shrimps (canned)	100g	5mg

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Tuna (canned in oil)	100g	1.5mg
Whitebait	100g	5mg
Winkles	100g	3mg

### Miscellaneous

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Bovril	10g	1.5mg
Oxo	1 cube	1.5mg
Egg (no shell)	60g	1.1mg

## Iron from non-animal sources

### Beans and pulses

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Aduki beans	100g	2mg
Baked beans (in tomato sauce)	100g	3mg
Blackeye beans	100g	2mg
Broad beans	100g	1.5mg
Butter beans	100g	1.5mg
Chick peas	100g	2mg
Lentils	100g	3.5mg
Mung beans	100g	1.5mg
Red kidney beans	100g	2.5mg
Soya beans	100g	3mg
Tofu	100g	3.5mg

### Cereals

Many breakfast cereals are fortified with iron (have iron added to them). Some examples are:

- Allbran
- Branflakes
- Cornflakes
- Fruit 'n' fibre
- Weetabix
- Weetos

You should check the food label for the iron content of these.

Fortified tins of pasta, white, wholemeal and granary bread and rolls, chapatti and naan bread are also good sources of iron (check food label for iron content).

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### Fruit and nuts

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Dried fruits: prunes, apricots, figs, peaches, currants, raisins, sultanas and dates	50g	1mg
Almonds	33g	1mg
Brazil nuts	40g	1mg
Cashew nuts	25g	1.5mg
Sesame seeds	10g	1.5mg
Coconut	25g	1mg
Hazelnut	33g	1mg
Peanuts	50g	1mg
Pecans	50g	1mg
Tahini paste	20g	1mg

### Vegetables

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Broccoli (boiled)	100g	1mg
Curly Kale	100g	2mg
Karela	100g	1.5mg
Okra canned	100g	5mg
Peas	100g	1.5mg
Spinach	100g	1.5mg
Spring greens	100g	1.5mg
Watercress	100g	2mg

### Snacks

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Bombay mix	100g	4mg
Trail mix	100g	4mg
Twiglets	100g	3mg

### Sweets

	Portion size	Amount of iron
Fruit gums	100g	4mg
Liquorice allsorts	100g	8mg
Plain chocolate	100g	2.5mg

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### **Fortified drinks**

Milk and chocolate drinks that have been fortified with iron, such as Milo and Ovaltine, are also good sources of iron (check food label for iron content).

### **Vitamin C foods**

Vitamin C in the diet will enable your body to absorb more iron from all your foods. Have at least one serving of any one of the following at each meal:

- Citrus fruits e.g. oranges, clementines, satsumas or blackcurrants or strawberries
- Fruit juice e.g. orange, mango and blackcurrant
- Green vegetables e.g. broccoli, spinach, peas, spring greens, karela
- Tomatoes or peppers
- Potatoes

### **Helpful hints**

- Try to avoid drinking tea with your meals as tea contains a substance called Tanin which can reduce the absorption of iron.
- Use only a small amount of liquid/water when cooking and reduce cooking time to retain vitamin C content of foods.

### **Changes I could make**

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### **Suggested menu**

**Breakfast:** Fruit or fruit juice

Fortified breakfast cereal or toast

**Snack meal:** Sandwich e.g. tuna, ham, liver pate or snack on toast  
e.g. sardines, baked beans

Vitamin C enriched squash

Fruit

**Main meal:** Serving of meat or fish or lentils

Vegetables

Potatoes or chapatti

Fruit e.g. orange

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### Iron supplements

Iron supplements should only be taken if advised by your GP. Iron supplements can be dangerous if taken in larger doses than recommended.

### Contact details

For more information please contact your dietitian.

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition: Iron and Health, 2010
- McCance and Widdowson's 'The Composition of Foods', 6th edition, Food Standards Agency 2002

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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