



Iron Supplementation

Iron plays a major role in maintaining good health for people of all ages. It is needed to form the part of blood called hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to our bodies cells. Without enough oxygen, cells become tired and weak.

What happens if I don't get enough iron?

Following a diet that does not supply enough iron can result in iron deficiency anemia. Some of the signs of iron deficiency include lack of energy, poor appetite, pale appearance, irritability and weight loss.

Young children, endurance athletes, older adults and pregnant or premenopausal women may not get enough iron in their diet. Vegetarians may not get enough iron if they do not replace meat with other iron-rich foods. Unusual blood loss, or other stresses can also result in low body iron stores.

How can I make sure that I am getting enough iron?

While your body needs only a small amount of iron, getting enough is a challenge for many people. Contrary to what we have been told, spinach is not the best source of dietary iron. Meat, poultry, and fish are better sources. These foods contain heme iron which is absorbed and used most efficiently by our bodies.

Whole grains, dark green leafy vegetables, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), enriched cereals, and pastas, dried fruits and nuts contain non-heme iron. While the iron in these foods is not as easily absorbed as heme iron, eating them often will help to increase your overall iron intake.

Should I take iron supplements?

Iron supplements are often recommended during pregnancy because the demands of the fetus can reduce the mothers iron stores.

You can follow these "iron boosting" tips

- ☺ Include a vitamin C rich food at each meal to increase iron absorption. Some good sources of vitamin C are citrus fruits, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, strawberries, and green or red peppers.
- ☺ Choose lean meat, fish or poultry often. A 75g (2 ½ oz) serving.
- ☺ Add dried fruits like dates, prunes, apricots or raisins to cereals, puddings and baked goods.



- ☺ Sprinkle iron rich wheat germ on cereals or add it to meat loaf or muffins.
- ☺ Use black beans, navy beans or lentils in soups, stews and casseroles.
- ☺ Top a tossed salad with chick peas or kidney beans.
- ☺ Add blackstrap molasses to baked beans or muffin batter in place of sugar.
- ☺ Stir-fry thin strips of liver with your favourite vegetables and serve with a crusty roll or in a tortilla.
- ☺ Include prune or tomato juice as a beverage or in cooking.
- ☺ Sprinkle toasted sesame seeds on a salad, stir-fry or casserole.
- ☺ Sprinkle Maca powder on yoghurt with fruit or hot cereal.
- ☺ Use a cast iron pan for cooking as some of the iron in the pan will be absorbed by the food.
- ☹ Avoid drinking coffee or tea with meals. These beverages decrease the amount of iron absorbed from the foods.