

# High Iron Foods

Iron helps carry oxygen around the body, which gives you energy and helps you stay healthy and fight illness.

People of all ages need to eat foods high in iron every day, along with a variety of foods from each of the five food groups. Try these ideas to boost your iron intake.

## Iron in animal foods

- Iron is found in animal foods like red meat, chicken, fish, eggs, liver and kidney.
- Animal foods have more iron than plant foods or processed foods.
- Iron from animal foods is absorbed the best by the body.

## Iron in plant foods

- Iron is found in plant foods such as legumes, lentils, green leafy vegetables and grain (cereal) foods.
- Iron from plant foods is not absorbed as well as the iron from animal foods.

## Boost your iron intake

- Try to eat lean red meat, fish, chicken, legumes or lentils every day.
- Choose a breakfast cereal with added iron (check the label).
- Choose multigrain or wholemeal bread and pasta. Add plenty of green and leafy vegetables such as broccoli, spinach, cabbage and brussels sprouts.

## Improve iron absorption

- Eating foods high in vitamin C with a meal can help you absorb iron more easily. Foods high in vitamin C include citrus fruits, berries, kiwi fruit, pineapple, tomato, broccoli, brussels sprouts and capsicum.
- Animal foods boost iron absorption from plant foods. For example, have lean meat and leafy green vegetables in the same meal.
- Try not to drink tea or coffee with your meal, this makes it harder for your body to absorb iron.
- Large amounts of unprocessed bran can decrease iron absorption. Limit additional bran supplements to two to three tablespoons a day.
- Antacids and aspirin make it hard to absorb iron. Only take these when you need them and talk to your GP or pharmacist.

## Step 1: Eat iron rich foods, including red meat, 3-4 times a week

Monday



Tuesday

Wednesday



Thursday

Friday



Saturday

Sunday



## Step 2: Add vitamin C when eating foods rich in iron



## Step 3: Drink tea and coffee between meals



This general advice was accurate at the time of publication (June 2020).  
For more information about nutrition and your individual needs, see your GP  
or an Accredited Practising Dietitian.