



EATING MORE:

IRON

Iron is a key part of red blood cells that carry oxygen through the body. Iron-rich foods build healthy blood.

BEST SOURCES OF IRON

Meat is an excellent source of iron, especially lean red meats.



- Lean beef and pork
- Chicken and turkey
- Fish, salmon, and tuna
- Iron-fortified cereal (all WIC cereal)
- Beans (like kidney, lentils, lima, navy)

GOOD SOURCES OF IRON:

- Tofu
- Leafy greens
- Eggs
- Peanut butter
- Enriched breads, tortillas, rice, and pasta

Your body absorbs more iron from meat than it does from other sources. If you do not eat meat, you may need to increase your intake of iron-rich, plant-based foods such as cereals, breads, and pastas with added iron and dry beans.

You can enhance iron absorption by eating iron-rich, plant-based foods with these foods **high in vitamin C:**

- Oranges, orange juice, grapefruit
- Tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, bell peppers
- Watermelon, cantaloupe, kiwi, and strawberries



COMBINE FOODS TO GET THE MOST IRON:

- Iron-fortified cereal (plant iron source) with an orange or half of a grapefruit (vitamin C source)
- Enriched pasta (plant iron source) with ground beef (meat iron source) and tomato sauce (vitamin C source)

HOW TO GET ENOUGH IRON:

- Eat a variety of foods during the day. Most healthy foods have small amounts of iron, so eat foods from all of the food groups.
- Cut down on foods like chips, cake, cookies, candy, and sweet drinks.
- Remember to take any vitamin or iron pill your health care provider prescribes.
- Milk can make your child feel full and reduce intake of food. Limit children to two cups a day. Wean from the bottle by 1 year. Milk is not a good source of iron.
- Avoid drinking tea and coffee with meals. These keep your body from getting iron from foods.

WHAT IF YOU DO NOT GET ENOUGH IRON?

- The amount of iron in your blood gets low. This is called iron deficiency anemia or just anemia.
- If you are anemic, you may feel weak, tired, and irritable. You may get sick and catch colds easily. You will not feel or look as good as you could.
- Children can have trouble growing or learning if iron levels stay low.
- Extra iron is needed during pregnancy. Your unborn baby may not grow as much as they should if you are anemic.

