

Follow these “iron boosting” tips

- At each meal, to increase iron absorption, include a vitamin C rich food such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, 100% fruit juice, strawberries and green or red peppers.
- Avoid drinking coffee and tea with meals, since these drinks may decrease the amount of iron absorbed from foods.
- Choose two servings of lean meat, poultry or fish (total of 150 g per day).
- Add dried fruits like dates, prunes, apricots or raisins to cereals, puddings and baked goods.
- Sprinkle iron-rich wheat germ on cereals or add to baking.
- Use black beans, navy beans or lentils in soups, stews and casseroles.
- Top a tossed salad with chickpeas or kidney beans.
- Add blackstrap molasses to baked beans or muffin batter in place of sugar.
- Sprinkle sesame, sunflower or pumpkin seeds on a salad, stir-fry or casserole.

Adapted from material produced by the City of Hamilton, Social and Public Health Services Department, Healthy Lifestyles and Disease Prevention Branch and York Region Health Services Department, Nutrition Services, Disease Prevention Branch.



Am I getting enough iron?

While your body needs only a small amount of iron, getting enough can be a challenge, especially for women of child-bearing age and for young children. Choosing a variety of foods from Canada’s Food Guide will help you to get iron and other nutrients you need to feel your best.

Meat, poultry and fish contain heme iron, which is more easily and efficiently absorbed by our bodies.

Whole grains, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), enriched cereals, breads, pastas, dried fruits, nuts and some vegetables contain non-heme

iron. The iron in these foods is not as easily absorbed. However, eating more foods containing non-heme iron will increase your overall iron intake.

The recommendations for the amount of iron needed each day apply to people eating a mixed diet that includes meat, fish and poultry. If your diet is vegetarian, you may need to consume twice as much iron to meet your daily needs.

Do I need to take an iron supplement?

If you are healthy and eat iron-rich foods every day, you probably do not need an iron supplement. If you suspect you have an iron-deficiency, consult a doctor.

Iron supplements, as well as other supplements, should be stored in a dry, safe place, away from children.

Taking supplements with more than 45 mg of iron per day can cause an upset stomach and/or constipation.

Iron Works!

Focus on Healthy Eating



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Although our bodies only contain as much iron as a small nail, this mineral plays a major role in maintaining good health for people of all ages.

Iron is needed to form the part of blood called hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to all the body's cells.

How much iron do I need each day?

Children 1-3	7 mg
Children 4-8	10 mg
Females 9-13	8 mg
Females 14-18	15 mg
Females 19-50	18 mg
Females 50+	8 mg
Pregnant women	27 mg*
Males 9-13	8 mg
Males 14-18	11 mg
Males 19+	8 mg

Source: Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs): Recommended Intakes for Individuals, elements. National Academy of Sciences (2001).

*It is recommended that pregnant women take a daily prenatal multivitamin and mineral supplement. This will help meet their increased daily requirement for iron.

What if I do not get enough iron?

Some of the signs that you may not have enough iron in your body are: lack of energy, poor appetite, pale appearance, weight loss and irritability.

Iron deficiency can be a problem for people who follow a low-calorie diet, and for some vegetarians who do not eat enough iron-rich foods.

As well, pregnancy, blood losses or other stress can also use up your body's iron stores.



How much iron is in packaged food products?

The Nutrition Facts Table is the best place to see how much iron is in a packaged food product.

Compare different products and choose ones that have the highest % Daily Value of iron per serving.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 125 mL (87 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 18 g	6 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 2 %	Vitamin C 10 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 2 %

Source (Health Canada)

(The Daily Value may not represent an amount of iron sufficient to prevent iron deficiency in people who have greater iron needs and/or losses and who may not easily absorb iron.)



Iron content of some foods:

Heme Iron Sources	Iron (mg)
5 large (60 g) clams, boiled or steamed	16.8
6 medium (42 g) oysters, boiled or steamed	8.8
75 g (2.5 oz) beef liver	4.6
75 g (2.5 oz) lean roast beef	2.1
75 g (2.5 oz) turkey, dark meat	1.7
75 g (2.5 oz) canned pink salmon	0.7
75 g (2.5 oz) chicken breast	0.4
Non-Heme Iron Sources	
250 ml (1 cup) Raisin Bran, Kelloggs™	7.9
60 ml (¼ cup or 35 g) pumpkin seeds, dried	5.2
1 pouch instant oatmeal, regular	4.0
1 (90 g or 3 oz) meatless vegetable patty	3.9
125 ml (½ cup) spinach, boiled	3.4
250 ml (1 cup) Cheerios, General Mills™	3.2
1 plain bagel (10 cm diameter)	2.5
150 g (175 mL or ¾ cup) firm tofu	2.4
175 ml (¾ cup) dark red kidney beans, canned	2.4
175 ml (¾ cup) almonds, dried	1.5
30 ml (2 tbsp) wheat germ, toasted	1.4
2 large eggs	1.2
15 ml (1 tbsp) molasses	1.0
6 prunes, dried	0.4

Source: Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods, Health Canada (2008).

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