



Problems with Iron Deficiency

Spinach may not give you superhuman strength to fight off villains like Popeye's nemesis Bluto, but this leafy green and other foods containing iron can help you fight a different type of enemy – iron-deficiency anemia.

Iron-deficiency anemia, the most common form of anemia, is a decrease in the number of red blood cells caused by too little iron. Without sufficient iron, your body can't produce enough hemoglobin, a substance in red blood cells that makes it possible for them to carry oxygen to the body's tissues. As a result, you may feel weak, tired, and irritable.

About 20% of women, 50% of pregnant women, and 3% of men do not have enough iron in their body. The solution, in many cases, is to consume more foods high in iron.

When you eat food with iron, iron is absorbed into your body mainly through the upper part of your small intestine.

Two forms of dietary iron: heme and nonheme.

Heme iron is derived from hemoglobin. It is found in animal foods that originally contained hemoglobin, such as red meats, fish, and poultry. Your body absorbs the most iron from heme sources.

Iron in plant foods such as lentils, beans, and spinach is nonheme iron. This is the form of iron added to iron-enriched and iron-fortified foods. Our bodies are less efficient at absorbing nonheme iron, but most dietary iron is this kind.

Food Sources High in Heme Iron

Very good source, with 3.5 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of beef or chicken liver
- 3 ounces of clams or mollusks
- 3 ounces of oysters



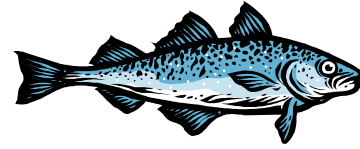
Good sources, with 2.1 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of cooked beef
- 3 ounces of canned sardines, canned in oil
- 3 ounces of cooked turkey



Other sources of heme iron, with 0.7 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- 3 ounces of halibut, haddock, perch, salmon, or tuna
- 3 ounces of chicken
- 3 ounces of ham
- 3 ounces of veal



Food Sources High in Nonheme Iron

Very good sources, with 3.5 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- Breakfast cereals enriched with iron
- One cup of cooked beans
- One-half cup of tofu
- 1 ounce of pumpkin, sesame, or squash seeds

Good sources, with 2.1 milligrams or more per serving, include:

- One-half cup of canned lima beans, red kidney beans, chickpeas, or split peas
- One cup of dried apricots
- One medium baked potato
- One medium stalk of broccoli
- One cup of cooked enriched egg noodles
- One-fourth cup of wheat germ



Other sources, with 0.7 milligrams or more, include:

- 1 ounce of peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, roasted almonds, roasted cashews, or sunflower seeds
- One-half cup of dried seedless raisins, peaches, or prunes
- One slice of bread, pumpernickel bagel, or bran muffin
- One cup of spinach
- One medium green pepper
- One cup of pasta
- One cup of rice



Contact your health care provider for more information.