

Iron-Rich Foods

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

- 3 ounces of beef or chicken liver**
- 3 ounces of clams, mollusks, or mussels**
- 3 ounces of oysters**

Good sources of heme iron, 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 chicken**
- 3 ounces of halibut, haddock, perch, salmon, or tuna**
- 3 ounces of ham**
- 3 ounces of veal**

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 nonheme iron.

Very good sources of nonheme iron, 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 of nonheme iron, 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**

Other sources of nonheme iron, 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 cup of spinach

One medium green pepper

One cup of pasta

One slice of bread, pumpernickel bagel, or bran muffin

One cup of rice

How to Get More Iron From Your Food

Some foods can help your body absorb iron from iron-rich foods; others can hinder it. To absorb the most iron from the foods you eat, avoid drinking coffee or tea or consuming calcium-rich foods or drinks with meals containing iron-rich foods. To improve your absorption of nonheme iron, eat it along with a good source of vitamin C – such as orange juice, broccoli, or strawberries – or a food from the meat, fish, and poultry group.

If you have trouble getting enough iron from food sources, you may need an iron supplement. But speak to your health care provider about the proper dosage first and follow his or her instructions carefully. Because very little iron is excreted from the body, iron can accumulate in body tissues and organs when the normal storage sites – the liver, spleen, and bone marrow – are full. Although iron toxicity from food