

INCREASING IRON IN YOUR DIET

What is iron deficiency anemia?

- Iron deficiency anemia is too few red blood cells (or hemoglobin in cells) to carry oxygen to the body.

Signs of iron deficiency anemia:

- Feeling weak and tired
- Pale or dry skin
- Loss of appetite
- Slow growth
- Brittle nails or hair
- Irritability
- Trouble paying attention
- Catching colds and infections easily
- Chewing on ice
- Eating non-food things such as plants or clay
- There may be no signs at all

How is it diagnosed?

- A blood test can tell if red blood cells and iron are low.

Who gets iron deficiency anemia?

- Those who don't eat enough iron-containing foods
- Those who lose too much blood
- Those who are growing rapidly and not getting enough iron in their diets
- Most common in infants and in teens, especially teen girls
- Young children may get anemia from drinking too much milk; more than 4 cups (or 32 oz.) of milk per day is too much.
- Teens may become anemic due to fast growth
 - Boys need more iron due to increasing muscle mass
 - Girls need more iron due to blood loss with periods

How is iron deficiency anemia treated?

- Eat iron-rich foods (meats, eggs, fortified grains)
- Eat foods high in vitamin C with meals to help improve the body use iron
- Avoid coffee and tea
- Cook with cast iron pans (if available in your house)
- Give an iron pill as directed by a medical provider



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Good food sources of iron:

- Shellfish
- Liver or organ meats
- Whole grain fortified cereals
- All red meats
- All poultry
- Fish
- Dried fruits such as raisins or dried plums
- Egg yolks
- Leafy green vegetables such as spinach
- Tomatoes
- Molasses
- Nuts
- Dried beans such as pinto or black beans
- Potato
- Pumpkin seeds
- Fortified breads
- Popcorn
- Wheat germ
- Tofu

Combination foods such as:

- Chili, sloppy joe on bun, taco, ravioli, spaghetti and meatballs, beef stew

Vitamin C-containing foods eaten at the same meal with high iron foods increases how much iron you take in:

- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Grapefruit/grapefruit juice
- Green chili sauce
- Orange/orange juice
- Salsa
- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Tomato/tomato juice
- Turnip



Department of Nutrition Services
(816) 234-3468
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