



Iron

Iron is a mineral that is found in a range of foods. It helps to transport oxygen around the body, making it essential for life!

It is also important for producing energy, optimal immune function, and storing oxygen in our muscles (this is what gives muscles their red colour!)

How much iron do I need?

Age	Recommended Daily Intake
Boys 14–18	11mg per day
Girls 14–18	15mg per day
Males 19+	8mg per day
Females 19+	18mg per day

Men can meet their RDI for iron with a serve of wholegrain iron-enriched breakfast cereal, a serve of red meat and handful of nuts each day.

Women in their reproductive years have a much higher iron requirement than men, due to the loss of monthly blood. As such they can find it difficult to meet their daily requirements with food alone, which means they also have a higher risk of iron deficiency.

Women are advised to have their iron levels regularly checked by their GP, who may recommend further dietary measures or an iron supplement.

Symptoms of iron deficiency

- Fatigue
- Lack of concentration
- Increased risk of infection
- Headache
- Pale skin
- Weakness/dizziness

Who is at risk of iron deficiency?

- Women in reproductive years
- Young children
- Pregnant women
- Vegetarians
- Vegans



Where do I find iron in foods?

There are two types of iron that we can get from foods. Iron from animal sources is known as **haem iron** and iron from plant-based sources is called as **non-haem iron**.

Haem iron is absorbed more efficiently and in a different way to non-haem iron.

Animal-based iron sources

Food	Serving size	Iron content
Chicken liver	100g	11mg
Beef	100g	3.5mg
Kangaroo	100g	3.2mg
Lamb	100g	2.5mg
Salmon	100g	1.28mg
Tinned tuna	100g	1.07mg
Lamb brains	100g	1.0mg
Pork	100g	0.8mg
Chicken	100g	0.4mg
Snapper	100g	0.3mg

Plant-based iron sources

Food	Serving size	Iron content
Weetbix™	30g	4.2mg
All Bran™	30g	3.2mg
Kidney beans	1 cup	3.1mg
Green lentils	1 cup	3mg
Tofu	100g	2.9mg
Chickpeas	1 cup	2.7mg
Cooked wholemeal pasta	140g (1 cup)	2.3mg
Cashew nuts	30g (20 nuts)	1.5mg
Raw spinach	1 cup	1.2mg
Rolled oats	30g	1.1mg
Almonds	30g	1.1mg
Dried apricot	30g (5 dried apricots)	0.93mg
Broccoli	1 cup	0.86mg
Cooked brown rice	140g (1 cup)	0.7mg
Wholegrain bread	1 slice	0.4mg

How can I improve my iron intake?

Some foods can help our bodies absorb iron, while others can inhibit it.

To ensure your iron is being absorbed we recommend that you:

- eat foods high in vitamin C with foods that contain iron
- cook your plant foods to improve the amount of available iron
- avoid having tea, coffee or calcium during or directly after having a source of iron
- speak to your doctor about any possible dietary interactions with your medications or herbal supplements that could impair iron absorption.

Ensure that you only take iron supplements under the advice of a GP, as too much iron can also be harmful.

