

Iron is an essential mineral element which plays a role in the transfer of oxygen and carbon dioxide to and from all body tissues. There is considerable evidence that iron may also play a role in the removal of lipids from the blood, in the liver, and the production of enzymes involved in releasing energy from the cells.

**Recommended Dietary Allowances** for iron intake are 10 mg. daily for men and older women, 18 mg. per day for women during child-bearing years, and 15 mg. daily for preschool children. Dietary iron exists in two forms: heme iron and nonheme iron. Plant sources (such as fruits, grains, and vegetables) supply nonheme iron, while animal tissues (such as meats & protein foods) supply both heme and nonheme iron. The human body can absorb heme iron about 5 to 10 times as well as nonheme iron.

It is estimated that only 5 to 15 percent of iron in food is absorbed by adults with normal hemoglobin values, although it can be as high as 50 percent in an iron-deficient person. Some dietary factors that may affect the absorption and availability of iron include:

1. Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) increases absorption of nonheme iron when foods containing both are consumed at the same time.
2. The presence of an adequate amount of calcium (found in milk and dairy products and salmon and sardines, with bones) helps improve the absorption of iron.
3. Too much dietary fiber tends to increase the transit time of food in the gastrointestinal tract and decreases the amount of iron absorption.
4. Some foods contain dietary factors which inhibit iron absorption, such as coffee, tea, chocolate, egg yolks, spinach, and rhubarb.
5. Antacids and other alkaline substances, when consumed in large amounts, interfere with iron absorption.

<b>DIETARY SOURCES OF IRON</b>		
<b>Food</b>	<b>Portion Size</b>	<b>Iron mg</b>
Almonds	12-15	0.7
Apricots, dried	5 halves	1.5
Bacon, cooked	4-5 slices	0.8
Beans, dried	½ cup, cooked	2.1
Beans, Lima, dried	½ cup, cooked	2.3
Beef, rib roast, cooked	2 ounces	1.8
Beef, Corned, medium fat	2 ounces	2.6
Beef, Dried	1 ounce	1.5
Beet greens, cooked	½ cup	2.4
Bologna	1 slice	0.7
Bran flakes, 40%	½ cup	0.8
Brazil nuts	2 medium	0.5
Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	0.6
Cashews	6-8	0.8
Chard	½ cup	1.9
Chocolate, bitter	1 square	1.3
Chocolate, sweetened, plain	1 square	0.8
Clams	2 ounces	4.2
Cocoa	1 Tablespoon	0.8
Coconut, fresh	½ ounce	0.3
Coconut, dried	2 Tablespoons	0.5
Corn meal, degermed, enriched	½ cup, cooked	0.4
Cress, garden	5-8 sprigs	0.3
Currants, dried	2 Tablespoons	0.8
Dandelion greens	½ cup	2.3
Dates	3-4	0.6
Egg, whole	1	1.4
Egg, yolk	1	1.4
Figs, dried	2 small	0.9
Flour, all-purpose, enriched	2 Tablespoons	0.4
Flour, whole wheat	2 Tablespoons	0.5
Ham, smoked	2 ounces	1.7
Hazelnuts	10-12	0.6
Heart, beef	2 ounces	2.8
Kale	½ cup	1.7

<b>DIETARY SOURCES OF IRON</b>		
<b>Food</b>	<b>Portion Size</b>	<b>Iron mg</b>
Kidney, beef	2 ounces	4.7
Lamb, leg	2 ounces	1.9
Lentils, dried	½ cup	2.2
Liver, beef	2 ounces	4.7
Liver sausage	1 slice	1.6
Molasses, light	1 Tablespoon	0.9
Oatmeal	½ cup, cooked	0.7
Oysters, raw	2 ounces	3.4
Parsley	10 small sprigs	0.4
Peaches, dried	3 halves	1.9
Peas, dried	½ cup, cooked	1.4
Pecans	12 halves	0.4
Popcorn	1 cup, popped	0.4
Pork loin, cooked	2 ounces	1.8
Pork sausage	2 ounces	1.4
Prunes, dried	4 prunes	1.2
Raisins, dried	5 Tablespoons	1.7
Rice, brown	½ cup cooked	0.3
Rye, whole meal	1 Tablespoon	0.6
Sardines	2 ounces	1.6
Shrimp, canned	2 ounces	1.9
Syrup, table blends	1 Tablespoon	0.8
Soybeans, dried	2 Tablespoons	2.0
Soybeans, flour, medium fat	3 Tablespoons	2.0
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	1.5
Sugar, brown	1 Tablespoon	0.4
Tongue, beef	2 ounces	1.7
Turkey	2 ounces	2.3
Turnip greens	½ cup	1.8
Veal roast, cooked	2 ounces	2.2
Walnuts	8 to 15 halves	0.3
Wheat flakes	½ cup	0.5
Wheat, shredded, plain	1 biscuit	1.1
Wheat, whole meal	½ cup, cooked	0.5
Yeast, compressed	2 Tablespoons	1.5
Yeast, Dried Brewer's	2 Tablespoons	2.7