

BOOSTING IRON

How to increase your iron levels with simple lifestyle & dietary changes

What is the problem with having sub-optimal iron?

If you have low iron levels and it is left unmanaged, you may develop iron-deficiency anaemia. This impairs red blood cell development and reduces the delivery of oxygen to the cells of the body. You may experience symptoms of fatigue, weakness and shortness of breath as a result of low iron levels.

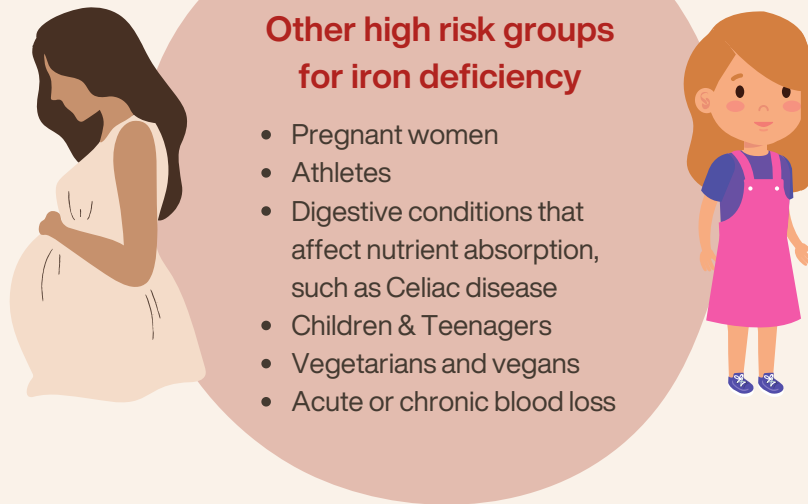
Low iron levels can impact the body in other ways too - impairing the function of many enzymes in the body involved in cellular energy production, hormone production and detoxification pathways. Your immune system also needs sufficient iron to do its job.

Iron is of vital importance during stages of growth such as pregnancy, teenage years and for children six months to four years of age. If adequate iron is not available during these times, it may result in sub-optimal growth and development.

Key lifestyle factors that impact iron levels

- Antacids and proton-pump inhibitors are commonly used in the management of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease/reflux. These medications reduce gastric acidity and the production of hydrochloric acid, and this significantly reduces iron availability and absorption.
- Aspirin and some other over-the-counter medications may bind to iron and reduce its absorption.
- High levels of physical activity, such as that undertaken by athletes causes increased iron loss from the body via sweat, urine and faeces. Those that undertake high intensity physical activity should have their iron status evaluated regularly.
- Women who have long or heavy menstrual bleeds should have their iron levels checked. There may be high losses of iron in these situations and levels should be assessed through an iron study blood test.

NOTE: Too much iron in the body can also cause fatigue and be dangerous. Always get advice from your healthcare practitioner before supplementing.



Other high risk groups for iron deficiency

- Pregnant women
- Athletes
- Digestive conditions that affect nutrient absorption, such as Celiac disease
- Children & Teenagers
- Vegetarians and vegans
- Acute or chronic blood loss

Boosting Iron Through Food

What you eat can make the world of difference to your iron levels and stores. Foods contain different forms of iron and this can also impact how much is absorbed by your body and available for use!

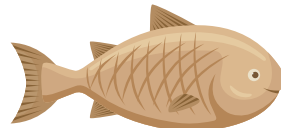
There are two forms of iron available through foods:

- **HAEM IRON:** In animal foods the well-absorbed 'haem' form is found.
- **NON-HAEM IRON:** In plant foods the less bioavailable 'non-haem' form is present.

This is one of the reasons why vegetarians and vegans are at greater risk of low iron levels - because iron found in plants isn't absorbed as well as that found in animal products.

Despite this, meat eaters may still have low iron if they are not sufficiently digesting the iron-containing foods that they eat.

You can support your iron intake by regularly eating the following iron-rich foods, while also preparing and eating these in ways that will increase their digestion, iron availability and absorption.



Animal products, such as meat, poultry and seafood all contain haem iron.

To get the most iron you can from these sources (if you eat meat & animal products):

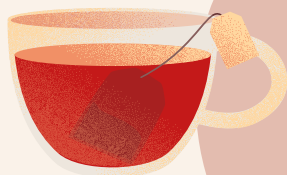
- Chew well and digest your food properly! Try adding bitter foods; such as rocket leaves, apple cider vinegar dressings and lemon juice, to your meals. Bitter tastes can improve the secretion of the digestive juices and trigger healthy digestive processes.
- Eat in a slow, relaxed environment. If you get indigestion, reflux or experience bloating after a meal, speak to your practitioner.
- Choose grass-fed beef as well as free-range poultry and eggs. These tend to contain higher amounts of essential minerals, such as iron. An animal that eats the diet they are meant to eat will be healthier & happier too.



Non-animal iron food sources, that contain non-haem iron, include dried fruits, parsley, walnuts, leafy green veggies, leeks, lentils and beans, peas, sesame seeds, pumpkin, cherries, strawberries & broccoli.

To get the most iron you can from these sources:

- Vitamin C rich foods, such as some lemon juice, raw capsicum or parsley, eaten with your vegetarian iron-containing foods will boost iron absorption.
- Soaking and sprouting grains, lentils, nuts, seeds and beans before cooking/eating them can help increase iron absorption. This occurs through reducing the phytates in these foods which can increase your body's ability to digest them. Look up information on soaking and sprouting online to learn more!
- Avoid drinking coffee or tea at meal times. Try to separate by one hour. The tannins in tea and coffee can prevent iron from being absorbed. Red wine also contains tannins.
- Steam your green leafy veggies to reduce oxalates from binding to iron, which can stop your body absorbing the bound iron. Lightly steam - they should go bright green!



Avoid drinking
tea or coffee
with, or within,
an hour of a meal

VITAMIN C + IRON = WINNING COMBO

PARSLEY & LEAFY GREENS
CITRUS SQUEEZED ON MEAT & LEGUMES KIWI FRUIT
CAPSICUM + BEEF SKEWERS
BERRIES
PINEAPPLE WITH STIR FRIES



Just keep in mind - the VERY BEST way to get vitamin C is to serve foods that are FRESH & RAW.

Squeeze of citrus juice or a salad dressing made with with fresh lemon juice.

A salsa, to top meat or fish, that contains some diced capsicum, pineapple or fresh mango & chopped parsley.

Chopped, fresh parsley leaves on your main meals. Grow a pot of parsley in the garden! Also grow leafy green veggies, like spinach and chard, to add to meals.



Iron Blockers!

Some foods can actually impair iron absorption in the intestine, therefore it is best to minimise intake of these in combination with iron-rich foods when possible.

Cooking of some of these foods, or soaking and sprouting them, will often reduce the impact of this and increase available iron.

PHYTATES/ PHYTIC ACIDS

FOUND IN: Nuts, seeds, beans, corn, oats, wheat

TRY: Soaking these overnight in filtered water, then rinsing and cooking. You can also sprout them after this if you like.

TANNINS

FOUND IN: Tea, red wine, pomegranates, berries, apples, cocoa & coffee

TRY: Separate these from food by at least an hour where possible.

OXALATES

FOUND IN: Spinach, kale, beetroots, nuts, wheat bran, raspberries, potatoes, buckwheat, rhubarb, avocado, tea & chocolate

TRY: Cooking or soaking these. Boiling is best. Eat them away from iron-rich foods.

CALCIUM

FOUND IN: Calcium supplements, some antacids, dairy foods, tinned salmon, broccoli, soy, almonds and figs.

TRY: Separate any calcium supplement you have from iron-rich meals. Eat a balanced diet, including iron-rich foods from sources other than dairy.