

All About Iron

Iron is an essential for the formation of hemoglobin. The iron in hemoglobin combines with oxygen and transports it through the blood to all parts of the body. Anemia is a result of iron deficiency- As a result of anemia you may have symptoms of tiredness, lack of stamina headaches, insomnia breathlessness, and loss of appetite. These symptoms or signs might show an iron deficiency. The US RDA for Iron is 18 mg/day but menstruating or pregnant women need much more than this.

Iron in Grains

Bran flakes	1 cup	11.0 mg
Oatmeal	1 packet	6.3 mg
Semolina (Cream of Wheat)	½ cup cooked	5.5 mg
Wheat germ	2 tablespoon	1.2 mg
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	0.9 mg
White bread	1 slice	0.7 mg

Iron in Vegetables (all ½ cup cooked)

Sea vegetables	18.1 – 42.0 mg	Bok choy, cooked	0.7 mg
Swiss chard	2	Peas, cooked	0.65
Turnip greens	1.6	Green beans, cooked	0.60
Prune juice, 4 oz.	1.5	Tomato juice	0.6
Spinach cooked	1.5	Broccoli, cooked	0.55
Beet greens cooked	1.4	Watermelon, 1/8	0.5
Potato, 1 large	1.4	medium	

Iron in legumes (½ cup cooked)

Lentils	3.2 mg	Lima beans	2.2 mg
Black-eyed beans	2.6	Kidney beans	1.5
Navy beans	2.5	Chickpeas (garbanzos),	6.2
Pinto beans	2.2	200 g	

Iron in Soy foods (½ cup cooked)

Tofu	6.6 mg	Soybeans	4.4
Tempeh	1.8	Soy milk	0.9

Iron in Nuts and Seeds (2 Tablespoon)

Pumpkin seeds	2.5	Almonds (¼ cup)	1.3
Figs, dried (5)	2.0	Tahini	12
Apricot, dried (5)	1.6	Sesame	1.2
Sunflower seeds	1.2	Cashew nuts	1.0

Add orange juice to your iron-rich foods for better absorption.

Iron Content of Various Foodstuffs

Chicken liver, cooked	3 ½ oz.	12.8 mg
Oysters, breaded and fried	6 pieces	4.5
Beef, chuck, lean only, braised	3 oz.	3.2
Clams, breaded, fried	¾ cup	3.0
Turkey, dark meat, roasted	3 ½ oz.	2.3
Tuna, fresh bluefin, cooked, dry heat	3 oz.	1.1
Chicken, breast, roasted	3 oz.	1.1
Halibut, cooked, dry heat	3 oz.	0.9
Pork, loin, broiled	3 oz.	0.8
Shrimp, mixed species, cooked, moist heat	4 large	0.7
Ready-to-eat cereal, 100% iron fortified	¾ cup	18.0
Oatmeal, instant, fortified, prepared with water	1 cup	10.0
Soybeans, mature, boiled	1 cup	8.8
Lentils, boiled	1 cup	6.6
Beans, kidney, mature, boiled	1 cup	5.2
Beans, black, mature, boiled	1 cup	3.6
Tofu, raw, firm	½ cup	3.2
Spinach, boiled, drained	½ cup	3.2
Black-eyed peas (cowpeas), boiled	1 cup	1.8
Grits, white, enriched, quick, prepared with water	1 cup	1.5
Raisins, seedless, packed	½ cup	1.5

High-In-Iron Food Sources

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 or mollusks
- 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 non-heme iron. This is the form of iron added to iron-enriched and iron-fortified foods. Our bodies are less efficient at absorbing non-heme iron, but most dietary iron is non-heme iron.

Very good sources of non-heme 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 non-heme 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
- One-fourth cup of wheat germ

Other sources of non-heme 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