



The Be Fit Minute

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PUMPING UP YOUR IRON

What Is IRON?

- It is an essential mineral.
- Dietary iron comes from two sources: animal (or heme iron) and plant (or non-heme iron).
- Heme iron is more easily absorbed by your body than non-heme iron.

What Does IRON Do?

- It delivers oxygen to all areas of the body.
- It helps maintain a healthy immune system.
- It is required for cell growth and development.

Are You at Risk for Deficiency?

- Do you suffer from a digestive disease?
- Have you recently lost a lot of blood?
- Do you have a chronic disease or illness?
- Is your body undergoing changes that would increase your needs (for instance, are you pregnant)?
- Is your intake of foods rich in iron low?

Are You Getting Enough?

- Most males need about 10 mg per day.
- Most females need about 10 to 18 mg per day (menstruation increases iron needs).

Signs and Symptoms of Iron Deficiency:

- Decreased energy/mental ability
- Feeling cold
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Shortness of breath
- Sore tongue
- Brittle nails
- Decreased appetite

Dietary Sources:

Dietary Source	Serving	Amount
Animal (heme)		
Liver	3 ounces	5-7 mg
Beef and Veal	3 ounces	3-5 mg
Pork	3 ounces	3 mg
Fish and Chicken	3 ounces	1-3 mg
Plant (non-heme)		
Cooked Spinach	1 cup	4 mg
Pumpkin Seeds	2 tbsp	4 mg
Iron-fortified Cereal	¾ cup	3-5 mg
Beans	1 cup	3-5 mg
Tofu	4 ounces	3 mg
Dried Fruit	½ cup	1-3 mg

Quick Tip:

Pair plant sources of iron with vitamin C to increase absorption.

Vitamin C Sources:

- Citrus fruits
- Strawberries
- Brussels sprouts
- Tomatoes
- Peppers
- Broccoli
- Kale
- Potatoes

3 Ways to “Pump Up” Your IRON Intake:

- Increase your intake of dietary sources of iron (see chart above).
- Pair your iron sources with foods containing vitamin C to increase absorption.
- Talk with a Registered Dietitian about your iron needs or the need for an iron supplement.