

How to Increase Your Iron Intake

Iron is an important mineral that helps your blood stay healthy by carrying oxygen throughout the body. Too little iron can cause iron-deficiency anemia. Iron-deficiency anemia develops when you don't have enough healthy red blood cells to give your body the oxygen it needs.

Iron

Why does iron matter?

Iron helps our muscles use and store oxygen. Low iron in the blood, called anemia, can cause the following:

- ◆ Feeling tired and weak
- ◆ Not eating well
- ◆ Poor growth
- ◆ Trouble focusing
- ◆ Weak immune system, which means you may get sick or have infections more easily or get headaches



Foods High in Iron

- ◆ All WIC approved cereals
- ◆ Beans, peas, and lentils (choose a variety)
- ◆ Dried fruit
- ◆ Enriched pasta, rice, bread, tortillas, cereals (check the label)
- ◆ Leafy greens (spinach, chard, collards, and kale)
- ◆ Meat (beef, pork, chicken, turkey, fish, canned tuna, shrimp, clams, beef or chicken liver)
- ◆ Peanut butter
- ◆ Prune juice
- ◆ Tofu

How to Get More Iron

- ◆ Cook food in cast iron skillets, pots, or pans.
- ◆ Soak dry beans in cold water for several hours before cooking. Drain and cook them in clean water.



Vitamin C

Eating vitamin C and iron together can help your body use the iron you eat. Foods with vitamin C include:

- ◆ **Fruit** - orange, cantaloupe, mango, papaya, grapefruit, strawberries, lemon, lime
- ◆ **Juice** - WIC approved juices or 100% juice (apple, grape, orange, tomato, pineapple, etc)*
- ◆ **Vegetables** - potatoes, tomato, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, bell pepper

How to combine vitamin C and iron

- ◆ Add a slice of tomato to your hamburger or sandwich
- ◆ Add salsa to your meat-filled taco
- ◆ Cook beans with tomatoes
- ◆ Have orange juice* with iron-fortified cereal

*WIC recommends limiting juice to 4 ounces daily for toddlers 1 to 3 years old, and 4 to 6 ounces daily for children 4 to 6 years old.

Dairy

Calcium makes it harder for your body to use iron. Dairy products are the most common food with calcium. Avoid eating a lot of dairy with your high-iron foods.

Drinking too much milk can fill up your child so they won't eat iron-rich foods, which may cause anemia. Visit [myplate](https://myplate.gov) to find out how much dairy you need per day.



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Iron-Rich Food Recipes

Learn to cook iron-rich meals with WIC foods using these great [recipes](#)!



Hummus

Ingredients

1-15 oz. can low-sodium garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
¼ cup water
¼ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons tahini (optional)
Juice of half a lemon (about 2 tablespoons)
2 fresh garlic cloves
¼ teaspoon black pepper and salt, to taste

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in blender and process.
2. Stop blender periodically and stir down sides.
3. Process until smooth.
4. Store in a container with a lid for up to five days.
5. Serve with bread, crackers, or sliced veggies

Black bean salsa with tortilla chips

Ingredients

8 corn tortillas
1-15 oz. can black beans
1-15 oz. can corn
½ cup tomato, chopped
½ cup cilantro, chopped
½ cup red onion, diced
⅓ cup lime juice
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 tablespoon cumin
Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Cut each tortilla into 8 pieces and put on a baking pan in a single layer.
3. Bake 8-12 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool.
4. Chop all salsa ingredients and combine.
5. Enjoy with cooled tortilla chips.

Spinach and fruit smoothie

Ingredients

2 cups spinach
1 cup orange juice
1 cup water
2 oranges
2 bananas
1 cup frozen strawberries

Directions

1. Add liquids and spinach to blender.
2. Blend together until combined.
3. Add remaining fruits.
4. Blend until smooth. Makes 2 servings.
5. Enjoy!

We hope you enjoy making these new recipes with your family!



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