Iron

Iron is an essential mineral that carries oxygen to our cells for the production of energy. It is present in red blood cells called hemoglobin. Getting enough iron in our diet is important to keep our bodies physically and mentally alert.

Two types of iron

1. *Heme* iron is from animal products such as red meat, fish and poultry. This form is the easiest for our bodies to absorb and use.
2. *Non-heme* iron is found in plant products including beans/legumes, nuts, whole grains and some fruits and vegetables. Many cereals are fortified with extra iron. The body has a harder time absorbing non-heme iron.

Increasing absorption

- The absorption of non-heme iron-rich foods can be enhanced by eating them with foods high in Vitamin C, or with heme iron sources.
- In addition, cooking with a cast iron skillet or with stainless steel cookware can increase the amount of dietary iron consumed.

For more information, contact Nutrition Services at 206-386-6327

To schedule an appointment with a registered dietician, please call 206-781-6228

Absorption reducers

- Some foods can reduce the amount of iron one can absorb including coffee, tea, high calcium foods, and high fiber foods.
- Try to avoid eating a lot of these foods at the same time as iron rich foods for maximum absorption.

How much do you need?

GENDER/AGE GROUP	IRON PER DAY
Male 14-18	11mg
Male 19-50+	8mg
Female 14-18	15mg
Female 19-50	18mg
Female 50+	8mg
Female, pregnant	27mg
Female, breastfeeding	10mg

- Women need more iron because they lose it through menstruation.
- Vegan vegetarians may require two times the recommended amount because heme iron foods are not consumed.
- If you do not have enough iron in your blood, it is called *iron deficiency anemia*.

Can you get too much iron?

- Yes. The upper limit set by the National Academy of Sciences is 45mg per day.
- Excess iron is not good for our bodies. It may increase the risk of heart disease.

(Continued)

Iron supplements

- *Ferrous sulfate* is the form of iron that is most easily absorbed.
- *Ferrous gluconate* however, may have less uncomfortable side effects.
- Supplements are also absorbed better if taken on an empty stomach. If you get an upset stomach, sustained-released formulas may be easier to tolerate.
- Constipation can also be a side effect of iron supplements. Drinking plenty of fluids and eating high fiber foods can help.

HEME SOURCES		
High		
Clams	3 oz	11+mg
Oysters	3 oz	7 mg
Game *Venison, elk, moose*	3 oz	6-7mg
Fowl *Duck, pheasant*	3 oz	6-7mg
Organ meats *Liver, heart, kidney*	3 oz	5-7mg
Moderate		
Beef *Sirloin, tenderloin, pot roast*	3 oz	3mg
Scallops, shrimp	3 oz	2.5mg
Ground beef (lean)	3 oz	2mg
Pork	3 oz	2mg
Low		
Tuna, light	3 oz	1-2mg
Egg	1 large	1mg
Fish *Mackerel, cod, salmon, halibut*	3 oz	0.5-1mg

Please note that nutrient content of food varies. Refer to food labels when available.

NON-HEME SOURCES		
High		
Dry Cereal *Total, Raisin Bran, Corn Flakes*	1 cup	18mg
Frosted Mini Wheats®	1 cup	15mg
Cream of Wheat	1 cup	10mg
Soybeans, cooked	1 cup	9mg
Cheerios®	1 cup	8mg
Pork & Beans	1 cup	8mg
All-Bran® Cereal	½ cup	6.7mg
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	6.5mg
Instant Breakfast®	1 pkg	4.5mg
Moderate		
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	4+mg
Refried Beans, canned	1 cup	4mg
Instant Oatmeal	1pkt	3.8mg
Blackstrap Molasses	1 Tbsp	3.5mg
Prune Juice	1 cup	3mg
Bagel (4 inch)	1	3mg
Apricots, dried	½ cup	3mg
Baked Potato (with skin)	1	3mg
Enriched noodles, cooked	1 cup	2.5mg
Dry Beans, cooked	½ cup	2.5mg
Figs, dried	½ cup	2mg
Green Peas, cooked	1 cup	2mg
Raisins	2/3 cup	2mg
Pearled Barley, cooked	1 cup	2mg
Collard Greens, cooked	1 cup	2mg
Low		
Wheat Germ	3 Tbsp	2mg
Spinach, raw	1 cup	1.5mg
Tomato Juice	1 cup	1.5mg
Whole Wheat Bread	2 slices	1.5mg
Brewer's Yeast	1 Tbsp	1.5mg
Nuts, without shells *Almonds, Cashews, Pistachios*	1 oz	1mg
Enriched Rice, cooked	½ cup	1mg
Soymilk	1 cup	1mg
Asparagus, cooked	1 cup	1mg
Greens, cooked *Turnip, beet, mustard greens*	1 cup	1mg
Peanuts, without shells	1 oz	0.5-1mg

SWEDISH

747 Broadway
Seattle, WA 98122

For a free physician referral:
1-800-SWEDISH (1-800-793-3474)
www.swedish.org

NS-08-08457 11/08