

Iron Rich Diet

A good health practice is to eat foods every day that contain iron, especially when treating iron deficient anemia.

Iron Rich Foods (Based on usual serving size)

Excellent Sources 3.5 mg or more	Good Sources 2.1 mg or more	Other Sources 0.7 mg or more
Heme Iron Clams, Oysters Organ Meats (liver, giblets)	Beef, ground or steak, cooked Duck Turkey, dark meat	Chicken, ham, lamb, pork, veal Egg Halibut, haddock, perch, salmon, canned or fresh Shrimp, sardines, tuna canned
Non-Heme Iron Blackstrap molasses, 1 Tablespoon Breakfast Cereal enriched with iron Cooked breakfast cereals enriched with iron Cooked beans such as lentils, soybeans or white beans Seed kernels such as pumpkin, sesame and squash	Canned beans such as chickpeas, cowpeas, lima, kidney, navy and split peas Dried apricots Egg noodles, enriched, cooked Refried beans Prune juice	Beets, canned Bread, enriched Dried, peaches, plums and seedless raisins Nuts such as peanut, pecans, pistachios, Pumpkin, canned Pasta, enriched cooked Roasted nuts such as almonds, cashews Sunflower seeds Wheat germ

- Iron is found in food in two forms, specifically heme iron (animal sources) and non-heme iron (vegetable sources).
- Enriched bread, cereals, noodles and pasta have had iron added to them. Check the food label for the word “enriched”. Check the nutrition label to see if the iron content is 10% or more.
- Foods that contain iron will be better absorbed if you eat them with a food that is high in Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid). (See list of foods that are Iron Absorption Enhancers.) You especially need to eat a non-heme iron food with a food high in Vitamin C – or you will not absorb the non-heme iron from the food.
- Eating a Heme Iron food with a Non-Heme food will also enhance iron absorption
- Save eating foods that inhibit iron absorption for meals when you are not eating heme iron or non-heme iron foods. (See list of foods that inhibit iron absorption.)

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Iron Absorption Enhancers

Food Group	Foods high in Vitamin C
Fruits or Juices	Cantaloupe, Guava, Grapefruit, Kiwi, Mango, Oranges, Papaya, Pineapple, Strawberries, Tangerines
Vegetables	Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cauliflower, Pepper-Green or Red, Potatoes
Other	White Wine

Foods That Inhibit Iron Absorption

(Avoid eating these when you eat iron rich foods)

Substance that Inhibits	Food
Calcium	Milk or Dairy Products
Oxalates	Beet Greens, Chard, Rhubarb, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes
Phytates	Bran, Soy Products, Whole grains, Legumes
Polyphenols	Red Wine
Tannins	Coffee, Tea

Menu Ideas

Meal	High Iron Food	Vitamin C Food
Breakfast	Breakfast Cereal enriched with iron, 1 oz.	Strawberries, ½ cup
	Cooked Breakfast Cereal enriched with iron, 1 packet	Orange Juice, ¾ cup
Lunch	Lentil Soup 1 cup	Kiwi, 1 whole
	Shrimp Salad	Cauliflower, ¼ cup, Red Pepper, ¼ cup
Dinner	BBQ Ribs, 3 oz.	Broccoli, ½ cup
	Ground Beef Patty, 3 oz	Cantaloupe, ¼ medium

- At least one iron-rich food and a Vitamin C food to enhance iron absorption should be included at most meals and snacks.

Frequently Asked Question:

Question: I like to have a cheese burger with a milkshake. I always pour milk over my cereal. You advise not eating foods the inhibit iron absorption (dairy) with an iron rich food (meat, fortified cereal) Do you have any suggestions?

Answer: You won't be able to have every meal "absolutely" perfect for your iron rich diet. Eat foods that enhance iron absorption in this situation, for example:

- With the cheeseburger, have your beverage be a high vitamin C juice to enhance absorption instead of a milkshake.
- With the iron fortified cereal and milk, enjoy a high vitamin C juice or fruit at the same time to enhance absorption.