

Are you getting enough iron?

Practical and easy to follow guidelines on how you can meet your daily iron needs.



Are you low in iron?

Symptoms of iron deficiency are subtle and may be mistaken for a 'busy lifestyle'. If you have any of these symptoms, you may be low in iron and should see your doctor.

- Tiredness
- Lack of energy
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Frequent infections

Why do you need iron?

For energy

Iron is essential for producing energy from food.

For your brain

Iron carries oxygen in the blood to the cells around the body, including the brain.

To fight infections

The immune system depends on iron to work properly.

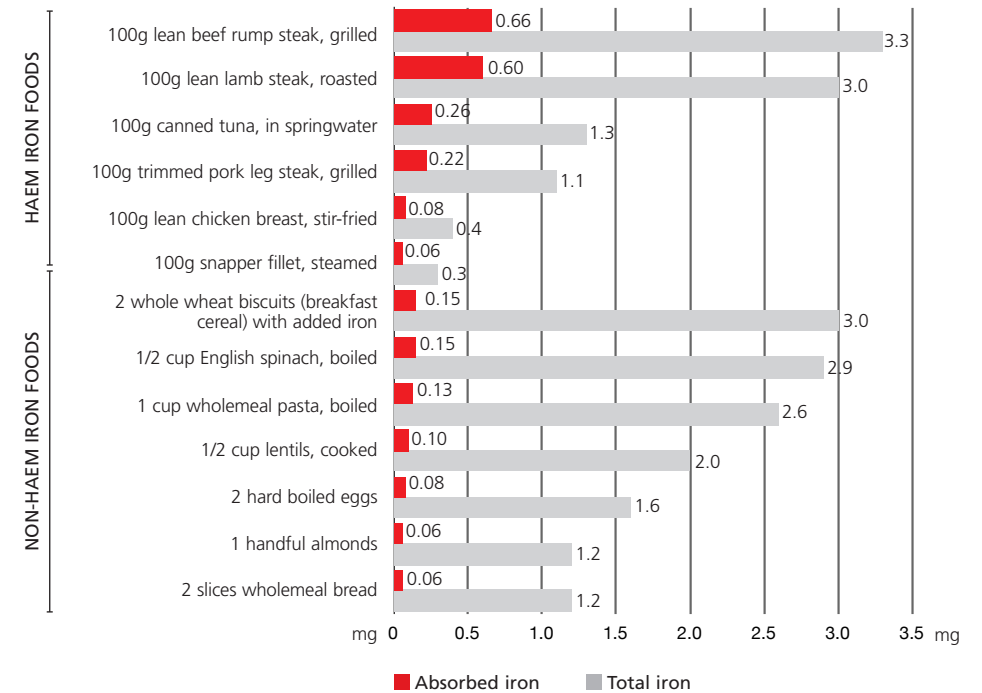
What are iron-rich foods?

The best way to keep your iron within healthy levels and prevent iron deficiency is by eating iron-rich foods regularly.

Foods high in iron are not necessarily all absorbed by the body in the same way. There are 2 types of iron found in food: haem iron and non-haem iron.

The amount of iron absorbed varies between individuals.

- **Haem iron** is well absorbed by the body and is found in foods such as red meat, offal (kidney and liver), pork, chicken and fish.
- **Non-haem iron** is less well absorbed by the body and is found in foods such as iron-fortified breakfast cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, wholemeal pasta and bread, legumes, eggs and nuts.



Did you know?

Around 20% of the iron in a rump steak (haem iron) is absorbed compared with only 5% being absorbed from spinach (non-haem iron).

What is the role of supplements?

If you are iron deficient, your doctor may prescribe an iron supplement to help you get your iron levels back to normal.



Iron supplements should only be used until your iron levels return to normal because:

- Most contain poorly absorbed forms of iron.
- They can interfere with the absorption of other essential nutrients like zinc.
- Large doses can cause unpleasant side-effects such as constipation and nausea.
- Iron supplements can be dangerous to children and a small percentage of the population that is genetically disposed to iron overload.

The best way to keep your iron within healthy levels and prevent iron deficiency is by including iron-rich foods regularly in your diet.



4 easy steps to an iron-rich diet

1. Try to include foods high in iron at meals.
2. Follow the Australian Dietary Guidelines and eat red meat 3 to 4 times a week; otherwise high iron replacement foods will be needed.
3. Combine non-haem sources of iron with vitamin C-rich foods (berries, oranges, tomatoes, capsicum) or foods containing haem iron to maximise absorption.
4. Avoid drinking tea, coffee and cola drinks with your meals.



Did you know?
The redder the meat, the richer it is in iron.

Iron-rich meal plan

Breakfast



- Choose breakfast cereals that contain added iron.
- Add Vitamin C-rich fruit to your cereal (eg. Berries, oranges, grapefruit, pineapple or peaches).
- Avoid drinking tea and coffee with breakfast.

Vitamin C increases the absorption of non-haem iron found in cereals.

Lunch



- Add haem iron foods such as beef, lamb or canned fish to your sandwich or salad to boost your iron intake.
- Add vitamin C-rich vegetables such as tomatoes, capsicum, broccoli or cabbage to non-meat meals to increase the absorption of non-haem iron.
- Avoid drinking tea, coffee or cola with lunch.

Meat increases the absorption of non-haem iron found in bread by up to 4 times.

Dinner



- Follow the Dietary Guidelines and include red meat 3 to 4 times a week or high iron replacement foods will be needed.
- For vegetarian meals, combine iron-rich foods such as green leafy vegetables, lentils or eggs with vitamin C-rich vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and capsicum to increase the absorption of non-haem iron.
- Avoid drinking tea, coffee or cola with dinner.

Enjoy red meat regularly as a good source of haem iron.

Iron-rich meal ideas

Salad

Mix the beef strips with a little oil. Stir-fry strips in a hot wok in small batches for 2 minutes, removing each batch when cooked. Set beef aside whilst making the salad. Combine the carrot strips, sliced cucumber and snow peas with lime juice and sweet chilli sauce. Add the warm beef strips to the salad, add coriander leaves and toss to combine.



Skewers

Thread diced lamb and vegetable wedges (eg. zucchini) alternatively onto each skewer. Brush the lamb with a mixture of rosemary, oil, lemon rind and juice. Grill or barbecue for 2-3 minutes on each side or until cooked to your liking. Rest skewers for 3 minutes before serving. Serve with a green salad of mixed lettuce leaves and avocado, drizzled with lemon juice.



Burger

Combine mince with crushed garlic and parsley. Shape into 4 round patties. Grill or barbecue for 4-5 minutes on each side, turning once only. Serve burgers on toasted Turkish bread, with lettuce, tomato slices and top with onions.



Cutlets

Brush the lamb frenched cutlets with olive oil and sprinkle with lemon rind and thyme. Grill or barbecue cutlets at high heat for about 2-3 minutes on each side, turning once only. Serve with a salad of diced tomatoes, steamed green beans and balsamic vinegar.



For more iron-rich meal ideas and cooking advice, visit www.themainmeal.com.au

These are guidelines only and are not intended as medical or nutritional advice. If you have specific health or dietary concerns, discuss them with your doctor or Accredited Practising Dietitian.

For additional copies of this brochure,
please call 1800 550 018 or
visit www.themainmeal.com.au



This information has been independently reviewed by the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA). MLA is a DAA corporate partner. For expert nutrition and dietary advice contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) in your local area by visiting 'Find an APD' at www.daa.asn.au or call 1800 812 942.



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Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) represents the beef, sheep meat and goat meat producers of Australia. MLA has a commitment to providing health professionals and all Australians with accurate nutrition information and promotes the role of red meat as part of a healthy balanced diet.