

Roadmap to

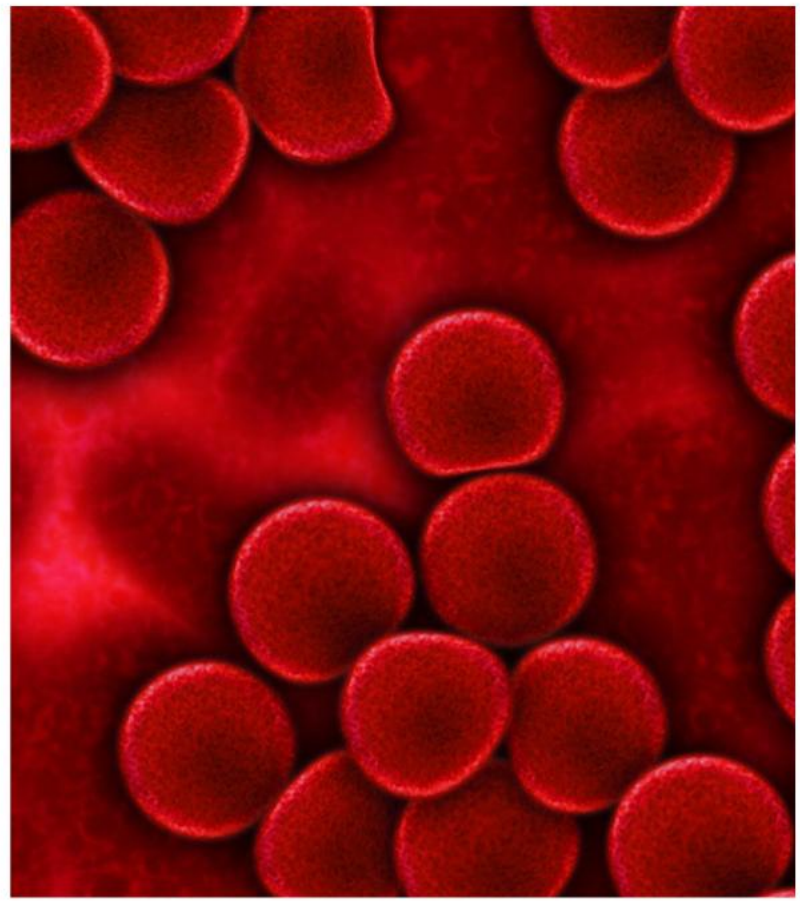
Improving Iron Levels

THE BEST IRON-RICH FOODS, PLUS TIPS & TRICKS TO BOOST ABSORPTION.

IRON BASICS

What you need to know

Iron is an essential mineral your body needs to work properly.



Your body needs iron to make **hemoglobin**, a protein your red blood cells use that carries oxygen around your body. Iron is also used to make **myoglobin**, a protein that stores oxygen in your muscles.

What is Iron Deficiency Anemia?

When your body's iron stores are low, it can lead to iron deficiency anemia. This is when your **red blood cells don't have enough hemoglobin** to deliver oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body.

Signs of iron deficiency anemia:

- Extreme fatigue
- Weakness
- Trouble concentrating
- Memory issues
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Frequent infections
- Exercise
- Pale skin
- Brittle nails
- Hair loss
- Headaches

The amount of iron you need daily depends on your sex and whether you're menstruating, pregnant, or breastfeeding:

Adult men (ages 19+)	8 mg
Adult women (age 19-50)	18 mg
Adult women (ages 50+)	8 mg
Pregnant women	27 mg
Women breastfeeding	9-10 mg

Common causes of iron deficiency anemia include heavy periods, pregnancy, stomach ulcers, stomach bleeding due to NSAID overuse, and celiac disease.

IMPROVING IRON LEVELS

through your diet

To up your iron levels, you'll want to eat more iron-rich foods. Luckily, iron is found in a variety of foods. It comes in two forms:



Heme Iron

This form of iron is found in animal foods like meat, poultry, and seafood.



Nonheme Iron

This form of iron is found in plant foods like legumes, fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, and some fortified food products.

Heme iron is more easily absorbed than non-heme iron. But heme iron also helps your body absorb non-heme iron better.

Combining heme iron and non-heme iron at meals can boost your body's overall iron absorption.

Pair With Vitamin C for a Boost

Vitamin C helps your body absorb iron. Adding vitamin C-rich foods to iron-heavy meals can improve its absorption. Foods high in vitamin C include:

- Broccoli
- Citrus fruits
- Bell peppers
- Tomatoes
- Cauliflower
- Strawberries
- Brussels sprouts
- Canteloupe
- Pineapple
- Kale

BEST FOOD SOURCES OF IRON


Beef


Beef liver


Oysters


Chicken


Pork


Turkey


Sardines


Spinach


White mushrooms


Pumpkin seeds


White beans


Lentils


Chickpeas


Kidney beans


Soybeans


Tofu


Cashews


Flaxseed


Sesame seeds (& tahini)


Dried apricots


Quinoa


Green peas


Broccoli


Canned coconut milk


Dark chocolate

IMPROVING IRON LEVELS

Other tips



Eat away from coffee or tea

Coffee and tea contain tannins, which interfere with iron absorption. That's why it's best to drink them a few hours away from high-iron meals.



Don't eat with calcium-rich foods

Calcium is a vital nutrient. But it can inhibit iron absorption. So it's best to eat high calcium foods (like dairy) away from iron-rich meals.



Soak beans, legumes & rice

Beans, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds contain phytic acid, an antinutrient that binds to iron. The solution? Soak beans, legumes, and rice overnight. One study found that soaking legumes before cooking them in fresh water removed about 60% of phytic acid.



Cook with cast iron

Cast iron skillets are coated with iron. When you prepare meals with cast iron cookware, some of the iron makes its way into your food. One study found cooking with cast iron can increase the iron content in food by around 16%.

TAKING IRON SUPPLEMENTS

To boost your iron levels

If you have severe iron deficiency anemia, you may need to take iron supplements.

If this is the case for you, it's important to work with your doctor to find the right dose. Taking *too much* iron can pose problems.

The Best Iron Supplements

Thorne Iron Bisglycinate Capsules
Pure Encapsulations Optiferin-C Capsules
Garden of Life Vitamin Code Raw Iron Capsules (vegan)
Floradix Iron & Herbs Liquid Supplement (vegetarian)

Tips For Taking Iron Supplements

1 – **Take iron with orange juice.** Remember, vitamin C boosts iron absorption. Having a bit of OJ with your iron supplements can help you absorb it better.

2 – **Take away from calcium supplements.** As mentioned, calcium can hinder iron absorption. So if you take calcium and iron supplements, take them at different times.

3 – **Drink a lot of water.** Constipation is a common side effect of iron supplements. Be sure to drink plenty of water to keep your bowels moving.

