



Food Sources: Iron

Iron is an essential mineral found in both plant and animal foods, as well as in fortified products. The body absorbs iron differently depending on its form:

- **Heme iron**, found in animal sources such as meat, poultry, and seafood, is absorbed efficiently but makes up only about 10% of the average diet.
- **Non-heme iron**, present in plant foods (and also some animal foods), is absorbed less readily but accounts for the majority of dietary intake.

Iron is critical for many functions in the body, especially carrying oxygen through the blood and supporting energy production. A lack of iron is the most widespread nutrient deficiency worldwide and is a leading cause of anemia, which reduces the body's ability to deliver oxygen effectively.

Recommended Daily Intake of Iron (RDA):

- Women, 19–50 years: 18 mg
- Women, 51+: 8 mg
- Pregnant women, 19–50 years: 27 mg
- Lactating women, 19–50 years: 9 mg
- Men, 19+: 8 mg

Iron Content in Common Foods:

- Breakfast cereal (fortified, 100% DV), $\frac{3}{4}$ cup: 18 mg
- Organ meats (liver, giblets), 3 oz: 5.2–10.9 mg*
- Oysters, steamed, 3 oz (\approx 6 medium): 7.8 mg*
- Tofu, raw, 3 oz: 6.6 mg
- Mussels, steamed, 3 oz: 5.7 mg*
- Soybeans, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup: 4.4 mg
- White beans (canned), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup: 3.9 mg
- Blackstrap molasses, 1 Tbsp: 3.5 mg

- Lentils, ½ cup: 3.3 mg
- Spinach, cooked, ½ cup: 3.2 mg
- Beef chuck roast, braised, 3 oz: 2.7 mg*
- Kidney beans, ½ cup: 2.6 mg
- Sardines (canned, Atlantic), 3 oz: 2.5 mg*
- Clams, steamed, 3 oz: 2.4 mg*
- Pumpkin seeds, roasted, 1 oz (≈¼ cup): 2.3 mg

*Indicates a good source of **heme iron**.