

# Iron for Healthy Blood

## Everyone needs iron, especially:

- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women
- Women up to age 50
- Babies and children
- Teenagers

## Why is iron important?

Iron is a mineral that helps build healthy blood. If you don't eat enough foods high in iron, your blood could become low in iron. People who have low-iron blood usually are tired a lot and get sick more often. Children who have low-iron blood may not learn as well.

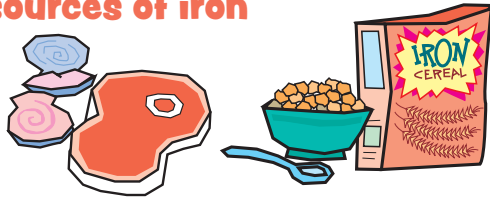
## How do you get enough iron?

You get iron by eating foods high in iron. Choose foods high in iron to include in your meals every day.

## What foods have iron in them?

### 🔥 BEST sources of iron

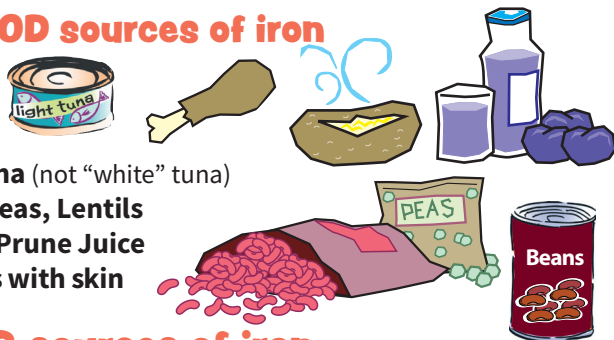
Liver  
Beef  
Lamb  
Clams  
Shrimp



WIC Cereals and cereals with at least 45% iron per serving

### 🔥 GOOD sources of iron

Pork  
Chicken  
Turkey  
Light Tuna (not "white" tuna)  
Beans, Peas, Lentils  
Prunes, Prune Juice  
Potatoes with skin



### 🔥 FAIR sources of iron

Eggs  
Tofu  
Spinach  
Green Peas  
Molasses  
Breads  
Rice  
Other Cereals



**COOKING TIP** To help add iron to your food, use a cast iron pan when you are cooking "acid foods" like tomatoes.



## What helps your body use the iron in foods?

Eating even a small amount of **meat, fish, chicken, or turkey** will help your body use the iron in other foods. **Vitamin C** helps your body use the iron in grains and vegetables. Eat or drink a food high in vitamin C at the same meal that you eat a good or fair source of iron.

## What foods are high in vitamin C?

**These fruits:** oranges, grapefruit, watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, mango, and papaya. Fruit juices such as orange juice, grapefruit juice, and other WIC fruit juices.

**These vegetables:** tomatoes, tomato juice, broccoli, cabbage, and green peppers.

Try adding one of these fruits or vegetables high in **vitamin C** to your meal the next time you eat a **good** or **fair** source of iron. For example, add strawberries to your cereal, or drink orange juice or grapefruit juice with your eggs and toast.

## Why do some children and adults have low-iron blood?

**Children who drink too much milk and do not eat enough foods high in iron can have low-iron blood.** Children 1 to 3 years old should limit milk and milk products to 2 cups per day. Children 4 to 5 years old should have no more than 2½ cups of milk or milk products per day.

**Some people have low iron blood because they eat too many foods high in sugar and fat.** They fill up on these foods and do not eat as many foods high in iron. Foods high in sugar and fat such as soda, fruit drinks, candy, and chips have little or no iron in them. Eat less of these foods and choose more foods high in iron.

**Tea, regular coffee, and decaffeinated coffee** can keep your body from using iron. If you drink coffee or tea, drink it in moderation and between meals instead of with meals.

## What about iron drops or pills?

People with low-iron blood sometimes need to take iron drops or pills. Follow your doctor's instructions if you are given iron drops or pills. Make sure you keep eating foods high in iron.

**CAUTION** Keep iron pills and vitamin pills with iron out of the reach of children. Pills with iron could be **deadly** to children if they ate too many by accident!

