Iron Rich Diet

An iron rich diet contains foods that are good sources of iron. Iron is an important mineral. It is used to make hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is a protein needed for red blood cells so that oxygen can be carried through the body. The iron level in the blood can be low. Reasons for low iron in the blood include:

- Lack of iron in the diet.
- Blood loss.
- During times of growth such as the growth and development of children or pregnancy.

Low levels of iron can cause a decrease in the number of red blood cells. This can result in iron deficiency anemia. Iron deficiency anemia symptoms include:

- Lack of energy.
- Increased chance of infection.
- Other health problems.

Males older than 19 years of age need 8mg of iron per day. Women ages 19-50 need 18mg per day. Pregnant women need 27 mg per day, and women who are over 19 years of age and breastfeeding need 9mg per day. Women over the age of 50 need 8mg of iron per day.

SOURCES OF IRON:

There are two types of iron that are found in food; heme and non-heme iron. Heme iron is absorbed by the body better than non-heme iron. Heme iron is found in meat, poultry and fish. Non-heme iron is found in grains, beans, and vegetables.

Heme iron sources:

Food	Amount of iron in milligrams (mg)
3 oz. chicken liver	10
3 oz. beef liver	5.5
3 oz. oysters	8
3 oz. beef	2-3
3 oz. shrimp	2.8
3 oz. turkey	2
3 oz. chicken	1
3 oz. fish (tuna, halibut)	1
3 oz. pork	0.9

Non-heme iron sources:

Food	Amount of iron in milligrams (mg)
Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal, iron fortified	3.9-7
½ cup tofu	3.4
½ cup kidney beans	2.6
Baked potato with skin	2.7
½ cup asparagus	2.2
Avocado	2
½ cup dried peaches	1.6
½ cup raisins	1.5
1 cup soy milk	1.5
1 slice whole wheat bread	1.2

1 cup spinach	0.8
½ cup broccoli	0.6

CERTAIN FOODS INCREASE AND DECREASE IRON ABSORPTION:

Foods that can DECREASE the body's absorption of iron include:

- Coffee.
- Tea.
- Fiber.
- Soy.

Try to avoid these foods and beverages while eating meals with iron containing foods.

Foods containing vitamin C INCREASE the body's absorption of iron. Foods that are high in vitamin C include many fruits and vegetables. Some good sources are:

- Fresh orange juice.
- Oranges.
- Strawberries.
- Mangos.
- Grapefruit.
- Red bell peppers.
- Green bell peppers.
- Broccoli.
- Potatoes with skin.
- Tomato juice.

Foods containing vitamin C can help increase the amount of iron your body absorbs from iron sources, especially from non-heme sources. Eat foods with vitamin C along with iron containing foods to increase your iron absorption.

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