
Sources of Iron

Iron is a mineral found in many foods. Iron helps deliver oxygen in the blood. There are two types of iron: heme and nonheme. Heme iron is easier for our bodies to absorb and is found in animal products like meat and poultry. Choosing heme sources of iron every day will help you get the proper amount of iron in your diet. Nonheme iron comes from plant sources. It is found in vegetables, grains, and other plant foods.

What foods are good sources of iron (2 mg or more)?

Foods sources of mostly heme iron

- 1 to 3 mg in 3 oz. cooked chuck, ground, rib, round cuts of beef
- 5 mg in 3 oz. cooked beef liver
- 2 mg in 1 chicken liver
- 2 to 4 mg in 3 oz. clams, oysters, sardines
- 2 mg in 3 oz. cooked leg of lamb

Food sources of mostly nonheme iron

- 2 to 9 mg in 1 cup cooked baked, black, black-eye, garbanzo, kidney, lima, navy, pinto, soy, and white beans
- 2 to 4 mg in 1 whole bagel, English muffin or frozen waffle
- 8 to 18 mg in 1 cup of fortified ready-to-eat cereal; check the label
- 10 to 20 mg in 1 cup of fortified cooked cereal such as oatmeal, farina, grits, or Malt-o-Meal
- 3 mg in 8 ounces of prune juice
- 3 mg in 1/2 cup cooked lentils
- 3 mg in 1/2 cup spinach
- 2 mg in 1/2 cup of firm tofu
- 2 to 4 mg in 1 cup tomato puree or sauce or stewed tomato

For increased absorption of iron, eat a food high in vitamin C at the same meal such as: oranges, grapefruit, pineapple, tomatoes, kiwi, strawberries, bell peppers, and broccoli.

Reading Food Labels for Iron:

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

(For educational purposes only. These labels do not meet the labeling requirements described in 21 CFR 101.9.)

Serving Size:

Located directly beneath Nutrition Facts. Read the household measure: 2/3 cup.

Servings per Container:

Servings per container are the number of servings that can be found in a box, bottle, bag or package of food. If you ate the whole container, you would need to multiply any of the information on the label by eight.

Iron:

Read the percentage amount.

The goal is to eat a total of 100% per day.

Example:

For this food label a 2/3 cup serving contains 45% of your daily recommendation of iron.

How Much do you need to eat each day?

The Dietary Reference Intake for iron depends on your age and gender:

	Age (years)	Iron (mg)
Men	19+	8
Women	19-50	18
Women	51+	8
Women	Pregnancy	27
Women	Lactation	9