

# Iron: Why do we need it?

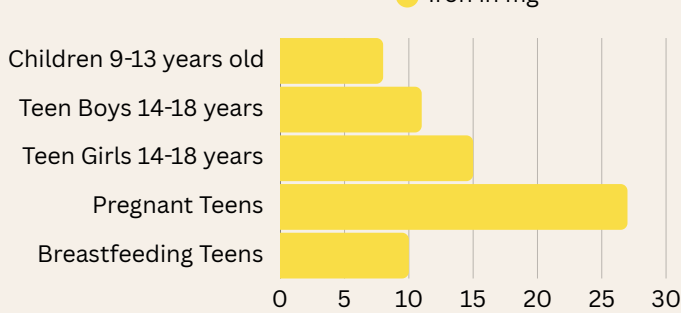
## What is Iron and Why do you need it?

Iron is an essential mineral that is needed for healthy blood. You get iron from the foods you eat. It helps your blood carry oxygen throughout your body. If you don't eat enough iron-rich foods, your blood could become low in iron. This is called iron deficiency anemia, or simply anemia.

## How much Iron do I need?

The amount of iron you need each day depends on your age, your sex, and whether you consume a mostly plant-based diet. Vegetarians who do not eat meat, poultry, or seafood need almost twice as much iron because the body doesn't absorb nonheme iron in plant foods as well as heme iron in animal foods.

## Recommended Iron Amount by Age:



## What foods are a good source for Iron?

Iron is found naturally in many foods and is added to some fortified food products. You can get recommended amounts of iron by eating a variety of foods.

Iron in food comes in two forms: heme iron and nonheme iron. Nonheme iron is found in plant foods and iron-fortified food products. Meat, seafood, and poultry have both heme and nonheme iron.

Your body absorbs iron from plant sources better when you eat it with meat, poultry, seafood, and foods that contain vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, strawberries, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and broccoli. Foods such as milk and medicines like antacids may decrease how well your body absorbs iron. It is best to avoid these a few hours before and after eating iron rich foods.

## Foods that are a good source of Iron:

FOOD	STANDARD PORTION	CALORIES	IRON (mg)
Ready to eat cereal, toasted oat, fortified	1 cup	111	9.0
Beef	3 ounces	173	2.5
Spinach	1 cup	41	6.4
Artichokes	1 cup	110	5.1
Stewed Tomatoes, canned	1 cup	66	3.4
Black Beans	1/2 cup	114	1.8

## What is anemia?

Anemia is diagnosed by a healthcare professional by testing your blood. This is often done by poking the finger and testing the level of a protein called hemoglobin. Hemoglobin helps the iron attach to the blood cells. The good news is – anemia is very treatable! Many people can improve or even reverse anemia by increasing the amount of iron in their diet.

## Normal Hemoglobin levels:

Males: 13.0 – 17.0 mg/dL

Females: 12.0 – 15.0 mg/dL

## Should I take an Iron supplement?

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, other health care providers about any dietary supplements and prescription or over-the-counter medicines you take. They can tell you if the dietary supplements might interact with your medicines or if the medicines might interfere with how your body absorbs, uses, or breaks down nutrients.