

## Food Sources of Iron

### Information about Iron

- Iron is a mineral that is important for good health.
- Iron carries oxygen to all parts of your body.
- Low iron levels can leave you tired, pale-looking and irritable.

### How Much Do I Need?

Age in Years	Daily Iron Needs milligrams (mg)/day	Do Not Exceed mg/day*
Men 19 and older	8	45
Women 19-50	18	45
Women 51 and older	8	45
Pregnant Women 19 and older	27	45
Breastfeeding Women 19 and older	9	45

\*This includes sources of iron from food and supplements.

- Vegetarians need almost twice the daily recommended amount of iron compared with non-vegetarians. Iron from plant-based foods is not absorbed as well by our bodies as animal food sources.

### Iron Content of Some Common Foods

You can find iron in both animal and plant foods.

- Animal sources (called "heme iron") include meat, fish and poultry. Our bodies easily absorb this type of iron.
- Plant sources (called "non-heme iron") include dried beans, peas and lentils and some fruits and vegetables.
- In Canada, grain products like flour, pasta and breakfast cereals are fortified with iron. Our bodies better absorb this type of iron when taken along with meat/chicken/fish or a source of vitamin C. Vitamin

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C rich foods include citrus fruits and juices, cantaloupe, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes and peppers.

The following table will show you foods which are a source of iron.

Food	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
<b>Vegetable and Fruits</b>		
Spinach	125 mL (½ cup)	3.4
Potato with skin, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	2.5
Tomato puree, canned	125 mL (½ cup)	2.4
Asparagus, raw	6 spears	2.1
Prune juice	125 mL (½ cup)	1.6
Dried apricots	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.6
Beets, canned	125 mL (½ cup)	1.6
Beet greens, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	1.5
Artichoke, cooked	1 medium	1.6
Kale, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	1.3
Green peas, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	1.3
Potato with skin, cooked	1 medium	1.3
Tomato sauce	125 mL (½ cup)	1.2
<b>Grains Products</b>		
Cream of wheat, all types, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.7-5.8
Oatmeal, instant	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.1-6.3
Cereal, most ready to eat types*	30 g	4.0
Saltines	10 crackers	2.3
Granola bar, oat, fruits and nut	1 bar	2.3

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Oat bran, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	1.6
Egg noodles, enriched, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	1.3
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	This food group contains very little of this nutrient	
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>		
<i>Meat, poultry</i>		
Beef, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.5-3.3
Turkey, dark meat, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.8
Chicken, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.8
Eggs, cooked	2 large	1.8
<i>Organ meats</i>		
Liver, chicken or turkey or lamb, cooked**	75 g (2 ½ oz)	7.7-9.7
Liver, beef, cooked**	75 g (2 ½ oz)	4.9
<i>Fish and Seafood</i>		
Clams, canned	75 g (2 ½ oz)	21
Oysters, farmed, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	5.8
Oysters, wild, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	3.3
Shrimp, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.3
Tuna, canned in water, light	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.2
<i>Meat Alternatives</i>		
Pumpkin and squash seeds, roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	8.6
Tofu, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	7.3-8.0
Soybeans, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	6.5
Sesame seeds, roasted	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.6

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Soybeans, dry, roasted	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.0
Lentils, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	4.9
Beans (white, kidney, navy, pinto, black, roman/cranberry)	175 mL (¾ cup)	2.7-4.9
Peas (chickpeas/garbanzo beans, black-eyed, split), cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	1.9-3.5
Sunflower seeds kernels, roasted	60 mL (¼ cup)	2.3
Baked beans, canned	175 mL (¾ cup)	2.2
Cashews, almonds, hazelnuts, macadamia, pistachio nuts	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.3-2.2
Hummus	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.5
Almond butter	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	1.2
<i>Miscellaneous</i>		
Molasses, blackstrap	15 mL	3.6

\*Check labels

\*\*Pregnant women should limit intake of liver to one serving every two weeks.

**Source:** Health Canada, "Canadian Nutrient File" [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index-eng.php) [Accessed September 12 2008].

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