

Iron in your diet

Iron deficiency is the most common nutrient deficiency in the world. But even if you don't eat meat you can easily get enough iron from your diet.

Men need around **8mg** iron a day, premenopausal women need more than **14mg**.

Iron exists in two forms, heme iron which is only found in animal sources, and non-heme which is found in plants. Heme iron is easier to absorb. You can increase the amount of non-heme iron you absorb by adding vitamin C to a meal, for example add citrus fruit or juice to a watercress salad to increase absorption.

It is possible to eat too much heme iron. Men and post-menopausal women should take care as the body cannot get rid of excess iron. Non-heme iron is not a problem as the body only absorbs it if it needs it.

Iron rich foods

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| <p>Liver</p> <p>Liver has 23mg of iron in 100g making it the richest source, but be careful, it is possible to eat too much heme iron.</p> <p>Liver also contains lots of vitamins and minerals especially vitamin A and B12.</p> |  |
| <p>Dark chocolate</p> <p>Dark chocolate has 17mg iron per 100g. It also contains fibre, magnesium, copper and manganese. But there will be sugar too – so it's best eaten as a treat rather than as a main source of iron.</p> |  |
| <p>Pumpkin Seeds</p> <p>Pumpkin seeds have 15mg iron in 100g.</p> <p>They're also good sources of plant protein, fibre, calcium, magnesium, zinc, selenium, antioxidants and omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.</p> |  |

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| <p>Pulses</p> <p>Soya beans have 15mg iron per 100g, chickpeas have around 5mg iron per 100g, lentils have 3.7mg iron per 100g.</p> <p>In addition pulses provide vegetable protein, complex carbs, fibre, folate, phosphorus, potassium and manganese.</p> |  |
| <p>Green leafy veg</p> <p>Spinach, kale, Swiss chard, spring greens contain 3.6 - 6mg iron per 100g.</p> <p>In addition they provide fibre, and many nutrients including vitamin A, vitamin C, antioxidants, fibre, folate, vitamin K, magnesium, calcium, iron and potassium.</p> |  |
| <p>Quinoa</p> <p>Quinoa contains 1.5mg of iron per 100g.</p> <p>It also provides protein including all of the essential amino acids, fibre and a good range of vitamins and minerals.</p> |  |
| <p>Dried thyme</p> <p>Dried thyme can contain up to 1.2mg of iron per teaspoon.</p> <p>This is an easy way to add iron to meals, and it has lots of other health benefits.</p> |  |
| <p>Dried apricots</p> <p>Dried apricots contain 2.7mg iron per 100g.</p> <p>They also provide fibre, vitamin A and Vitamin C – but they also contain sugar so eat as a treat.</p> |  |