Iron Rich Foods and their benefits

What is Iron?



Iron is an essential mineral found naturally in foods, added to fortified products, and available as supplements. It exists in two forms in our diet:

- **Heme iron:** found in animal products like meat, fish, and poultry.
- **Non-heme iron:** found in plants like legumes, nuts, green leafy vegetables and iron-fortified foods.

Why do we need it?

- It gives you energy.
- It helps with better oxygen flow.
- It helps your brain work well.
- It fights infection.
- It helps the developing baby grow well.

Food Sources of Iron:

- Meat, especially beef
- Shrimp, fish
- Tofu
- Turkey, chicken
- Lima beans, sweet peas
- Liver
- Greens
- Pinto beans, lentils, chickpeas, baked beans
- Whole grain or enriched bread and pasta
- Pumpkin seeds, pistachios, peanuts
- Iron-fortified cereals, including hot cereals and grits

Blood Test Today: _____

My Goal: _____

Date: _____

Reading the food label:

Nutrition Facts

4 servings per Container

Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)

Amount Per Serving

Calories **240**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 4g	**5%**
Saturated Fat 1.5g	**8%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	**2%**
Sodium 430mg 19%	
Total Carbohydrate 46g	**17%**
Dietary Fiber 7g	**25%**
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	**4%**
Protein 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%

*The % Daily Value 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.

- Look for the **Percent Daily Value** (%DV) on the Nutrition Facts label on food.
- Look for **iron** and the percentage next to it.
- A food is considered a **good** source of iron if the number is between 10% and 19%.
- If the number is more than 20%, then it is considered an **excellent** source of iron.

Caution: Keep iron pills, including prenatal vitamins and multivitamins, away from children.

WIC foods with Iron

To increase iron:

- Pair iron-rich foods with vitamin C sources such as oranges, grapefruits, lemons, strawberries, bell peppers, tomatoes, kiwi, and broccoli to improve iron absorption.
- Cook with cast iron cookware. This can add some iron to foods.
- Don't drink coffee or tea with meals high in iron. They contain compounds called tannins, which make it hard for your body to use iron.
- Take your iron pills or prenatal vitamins with water or juice, not milk. Calcium can make it hard for your body to absorb iron.



How can I use my WIC foods to get more iron?



Eat a bowl of iron-fortified cereal each day.

- Drink vitamin C-rich juice with a food that is listed as a good source of iron.
- Use dried beans in soups, salads or salsas.
- Use dried beans in soups, salads or salsas.
- Visit the Farmers' Market to buy fresh fruits and vegetables high in iron and vitamin C, such as sinach, kale, collards, broccoli, lentils, bell peppers, strawberries, oranges.



What will I do to reach my goal?

- ☐ I will include red meat, chicken or turkey in three meals a week.
- ☐ I will include iron-fortified cereals and bread products as part of my daily food choices.
- ☐ I will drink a 4 to 6 oz. glass of 100% fruit juice with a bowl of iron-fortified WIC cereal 4 days a week.
- ☐ I will create combination meals/ snacks that include a good source of iron and good source of vitamin C.
- ☐ I will ask my doctor about taking an iron pill or a vitamin supplement.
- ☐ I will read food labels to ensure I select foods rich in iron.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Child and Family Well-Being www.ncdhhs.gov/nc-wic-cacfp
This institution is an equal opportunity provider. 10/26 CNSS# 0011-D