



# Iron

## Did You Know?

Vitamin C can help prevent or treat iron deficiency by assisting your body in absorbing iron. Try adding these foods rich in vitamin C to help you prevent or treat iron deficiency.

- Oranges
- Grapefruit
- Kiwifruit
- Red and Green Bell Peppers
- Broccoli
- Strawberries
- Baked Potatoes
- Tomatoes

For more information about the benefits of vitamin C, check out our handout *Vitamin C*.



Iron is an essential mineral for many important body processes. It helps carry oxygen from our lungs to the rest of our bodies and helps our muscles store and use the oxygen. Also, iron works with body enzymes to digest food and carry out many bodily reactions. Some excess iron can be stored by the body for future needs.

## How much do I need?

- 8 milligrams per day for adult men ages 19 or older
- 8 milligrams per day for women ages 51 or older
- 18 milligrams per day for adult women 19 – 50 years old
- 27 milligrams per day for pregnant women
- For recommendations for infants, children, and teens, check out the chart in CSU Extension's Fact Sheet: [Iron: An Essential Nutrient](#).

## Food Sources

Food sources rich in iron include dried fruit, legumes, whole grains, lean red meat, eggs, salmon, tuna, oysters, and liver. It is also found in vegetables such as spinach, kale, broccoli, collards, and asparagus. Sometimes iron is fortified in foods such as breakfast cereals.

## What happens if I don't get enough?

Iron deficiency is very common in the United States and is the leading cause of anemia, an advanced stage of iron depletion. Low amounts of iron can increase fatigue and weaken the immune system as well as cause shortness of breath, nausea, headaches, and weight loss. Iron deficiency is common among long distance runners, people who donate blood, individuals with certain gastrointestinal problems, and menstruating, pregnant, or postnatal women.

## Can I get too much?

It is unlikely that someone would get too much iron from food alone. Yet, large amounts of iron supplements can lead to iron poisoning. Symptoms of iron poisoning include fatigue, dizziness, nausea, headache, weight loss, shortness of breath, and grayish skin coloring.