

# 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
- 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.

## How Much Iron Should I Aim For?

Age in years	Aim for an intake of* milligrams (mg)/day	Stay below* 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.

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

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Food	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>		
Spinach, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	3.4
Tomato puree	125 mL (½ cup)	2.4
Asparagus, raw	6 spears	2.1
Potato, with skin, cooked	1 medium	1.3-1.9
Prune juice	125 mL (½ cup)	1.6
Apricots, dried	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
Tomato sauce	125 mL (½ cup)	1.3
<b>Grain Products</b>		
Cream of wheat, all types, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.7-5.8
Oatmeal, instant, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	5.1-6.3
Cereal, dry, all types	30 g (check product label for serving size)	4.0
Cracker, soda	6 crackers	2.3
Granola bar, oat, fruits and nut	1 bar	2.3
Oat bran cereal, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	1.6
Pasta, 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 and Poultry</i>		
Duck, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.0-7.4
Moose, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	3.8
Beef, various cuts, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz) 1.4-	3.3
Ground meat (beef, lamb), cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz) 1.3-	2.2
Turkey, various types, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.0-2.0
Chicken, various types, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.4-2.0
Ground meat (turkey, chicken, pork), cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.8-1.5

Pork, various cuts, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.6-1.1
<i>Organ Meat</i>		
Liver, pork, cooked*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	13.4
Liver (chicken, turkey, lamb) cooked*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	6.2-9.7
Kidney, lamb	75 g (2 ½ oz)	9.3
Liver, beef, cooked*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	4.9
Kidney (beef, veal, pork), cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.3-4.4
<i>Fish and Seafood</i>		
Clams, canned	75 g (2 ½ oz)	21
Oysters, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	3.3-9
Shrimp, cooked	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.3
Sardines, canned	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.7-2.2
Tuna, light, canned in water	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.2
<i>Meat Alternatives</i>		
Pumpkin or squash seeds	60 mL (¼ cup)	8.6
Tofu	175 mL (¾ cup)	7.3-8.0
Soybeans, mature, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	6.5
Lentils, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	4.9
Beans (white, kidney, navy, pinto, black, roman/cranberry), cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	2.6-4.9
Peas (chickpeas/garbanzo beans, blackeyed, split), cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	1.9-3.5
Sunflower seeds, without shell	60 mL (¼ cup)	2.5
Baked beans, canned	175 mL (¾ cup)	2.2
Nuts (cashews, almonds, hazelnuts, macadamia, pistachio nuts), without shell	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.3-2.2
Egg, cooked	2 large	1.2-1.8
Soy nuts	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.7
Hummus	60 mL (¼ cup)	1.4
Almond butter	30 mL (2 Tbsp)	1.2
<b>Other</b>		
Blackstrap molasses	15 mL (1 Tbsp)	3.6

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

Source: "Canadian Nutrient File" <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index-eng.php>

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