



Iron



TEEN GIRLS
need almost
30% more
than boys!





Iron Quiz

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Are you female? | YES | NO |
| 2. Do you avoid red meat? | YES | NO |
| 3. Are you trying to lose weight by eating less? | YES | NO |
| 4. Do you often skip meals? | YES | NO |
| 5. Do you drink tea or coffee with your meals? | YES | NO |
| 6. Do you often have heavy menstrual periods? | YES | NO |

If you answered “yes” to 2 or more of these questions, you may not have enough iron in your body.

What does iron do in my body?

Iron is an important mineral found in every cell in your body.

Iron:

- Builds red blood cells
- Helps cells work in the body
- Carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of your body
- Helps the brain work at its best

Why is iron important for me?

All teens need iron to grow and to maintain health. Teen girls need more iron than boys because they lose iron during their menstrual periods. Girls with a heavy flow need more iron than girls with a light flow. Teen girls, 14 to 18 years of age, should aim to have 15 mg of iron each day.

What happens if I don't get enough iron?

You may:

- Look pale
- Feel tired
- Have trouble studying or concentrating on your work
- Feel out of breath
- Not have enough energy to do the things you want
- Feel irritable

Did you know?
If you skip meals regularly or are cutting out foods, you may not be getting enough iron each day.

What do I need to eat to get enough iron?

It is important to get iron from a variety of foods. Iron comes in two forms:

1. **Heme iron** is very easily absorbed by your body.

Foods with heme iron:

- Beef
- Lamb
- Pork
- Liver
- Veal
- Turkey and chicken (dark meat has more iron)
- Fish and seafood



2. **Non-heme iron** is not absorbed as well as heme iron.

Foods with non-heme iron:

- Breakfast cereals (fortified with iron)
- Breads and pasta (whole grain and enriched)
- Lentils, dried peas and beans
- Seeds and nuts (pumpkin, sesame, peanuts)
- Dried fruit (raisins, apricots)
- Dark green, leafy vegetables
- Eggs



Did you know?

Teen girls who do not eat any meat, fish or poultry need almost twice as much iron as girls who do.

Ways to get the most iron from my food

1. Go for heme:

Heme iron is easier to absorb than non-heme iron. Eating meat, fish or poultry also helps the body to use non-heme iron from other foods.

Did you know?

If you add meat or foods with lots of vitamin C to your meal, you can increase your absorption of non-heme iron by up to four times.

2. Include vitamin C-rich foods with your meals:

Foods that contain vitamin C help the body absorb non-heme iron.

Good sources of vitamin C

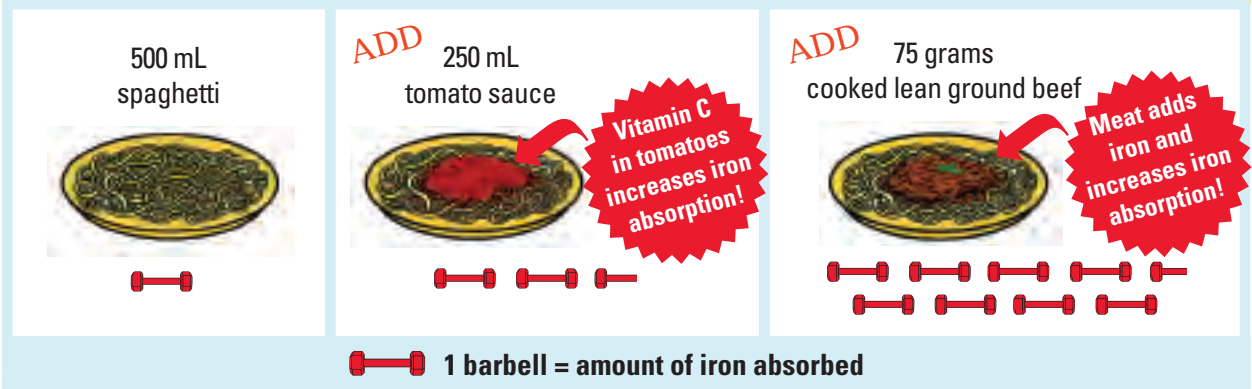
- Green, yellow and red peppers
- Oranges, grapefruits, clementines, mandarins
- Strawberries, raspberries, kiwis
- Tomatoes, turnips
- Cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts
- 100% juices (orange, tomato, apple with added vitamin C)

3. Avoid tea and coffee during meals:

Tea and coffee contain polyphenols, which lower the amount of non-heme iron your body can absorb.



Get the most iron from non-heme foods - Here's how it works!



Easy steps to iron-rich eating

1. Enjoy a variety of foods from ***Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide***.

Sample day's menu with the recommended amount of iron

- Breakfast:** Bowl of corn flakes with milk and a glass of orange juice
- Lunch:** Turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread with lettuce and tomato and chocolate milk
- Dinner:** Beef burrito, salad and apple juice
- Snacks:** Yogurt, baby carrots, trail mix and an apple

2. Eat foods high in heme iron.
 - Choose beef, lamb, pork, veal, poultry and fish more often.
 - Red meat (like beef and lamb) has the highest amount of heme iron. Beef is leaner and more nutritious than you may think.

3. Combine foods high in non-heme iron with meat, fish, poultry and/or vitamin C-rich foods to increase iron absorption.

- Have breakfast every day. Cereal is an easy way to get non-heme iron.
- Add ground beef to pizza or nachos.
- Top a leafy green salad with sliced grilled chicken.

4. Avoid drinking tea or coffee with your meal.

- If you drink tea or coffee, wait until one hour after meals and/or choose juice or milk instead.

5. If you do not eat meat, fish or poultry, include vitamin C-rich foods with your meals to increase absorption of non-heme iron.

- Add strawberries to breakfast cereal.
- Drink a glass of juice with a veggie burger.

If you have any questions or concerns about iron, talk to a registered dietitian or your family doctor.