



Dietary Sources of Iron

Iron is involved in the transport of oxygen around the body in red blood cells. It also plays a role in energy production, DNA synthesis and repair and immunity. Iron deficiency can present with fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, easy bruising, and susceptibility to illness. However, supplementation should only be prescribed when blood tests prove low iron levels.

Types of Iron

There are two types of iron, heme (found in animal sources) and non-heme (vegetarian sources). Our bodies absorb heme-iron through the gastrointestinal tract more efficiently than non-heme, however, iron deficiency is just as common in meat eaters as it is in vegetarians, due to the prominence of gut issues in Western society, leading to poor absorption.

Absorption of non-heme can be improved by:

- Soaking overnight (legumes, nuts and seeds)
- Boiling
- Steaming
- Fermentation (sourdough breads, tempeh and tofu)
- Adding fresh vitamin C (lemon, lime, uncooked fruit, fresh chili, raw capsicum) into your meals
- Pairing with fermented foods and drinks such as sauerkraut, yogurt, pickled vegetables, kefir, kombucha

Tannins found in red wine, coffee and tea **block** the absorption of iron. Consume these at least 30 minutes to 1 hour away from iron sources of food.

Vegetarian sources of iron:

Beans (soy, white, kidney, lentils, chickpeas, edamame, mung, peas), parsley, spinach, seaweed (nori), seeds (chia, pumpkin, linseed), amaranth, quinoa, tahini, cashews

