

Heavy menstrual bleeding and iron deficiency anaemia

*Girls with heavy menstrual bleeding have a higher risk of progressive iron loss leading to **iron deficiency anaemia***

You have heavy menstrual bleeding if

- ☞ your period lasts longer than 7 days
- ☞ you need to change long and super-absorbent pads once every 1 - 2 hours
- ☞ you pass large blood clots
- ☞ you suddenly pass a large amount of blood which soaks through your underwear

- Iron is an essential micronutrient for red blood cell formation
- Without sufficient iron, the body cannot produce enough **hemoglobin**, a substance in red blood cells that transports oxygen to various tissues and organs.
- **Iron deficiency anaemia** may present as dizziness, headache, fatigue, breathlessness, palpation or chest pain, impaired physical performance and poor appetite

How to prevent iron deficiency anaemia due to heavy menstrual bleeding ?

- ✓ Consult a doctor to investigate and treat heavy menstrual bleeding
- ✓ Have an iron-rich diet
- ✓ Take iron supplements as prescribed by doctor
- ✗ Avoid taking over-the-counter iron supplements
 - Iron supplements can affect the absorption of other nutritional minerals and cause gastrointestinal discomforts
 - Iron may interact with some medications
 - In severe cases, excessive intake of iron over time can lead to major organ failures or even death

How to maintain adequate iron intake ?

Consume iron-rich food

- ✓ Eat a moderate amount of meat, fish and seafood. Animal-based iron-rich food contains haem iron which can be absorbed easily.
- ✓ Eat more dark green vegetables and beans. Plant-based iron-rich food contains non-haem iron which is less readily absorbable and its absorption is affected by other foods and drinks in the diet.
- ✓ Iron-fortified cereals are also good sources of iron.

Consume adequate fruit and vegetables

- ✓ Consume vitamin C-rich fruit and vegetables to enhance absorption of iron from plant sources

Reduce tea or coffee with meals

- Try to avoid drinking tea or coffee within 1 to 2 hours after meals as they can reduce iron absorption
- Plain water or water added with lemon is a better choice as a beverage for meals

The recommended daily intake of iron for girls aged 9 to 17-year old: 16 to 18 mg

Iron content of food

Food	Weight	Iron (mg)	Food	Weight	Iron (mg)
Beef fillet (cooked)	100 g	2.1	Adzuki beans (cooked)	1 cup* (230 g)	4.6
Pork loin (cooked)	100 g	1.2	Lentils (cooked)	1 cup (198g)	6.6
Mutton (cooked)	100 g	1.9	Cashew nuts (dry roasted)	1 oz. (28 g)	1.7
Chicken leg (cooked)	100 g	1.3	Sesame (roasted)	1 Tbsp (9 g)	1.3
Tuna fish (canned in water)	100 g	1.5	Peanuts (dry roasted)	1 oz. (28 g)	0.6
Clams (cooked)	100 g	28.0	Raisins (seedless)	0.5 cup (72 g)	1.4
Oysters (cooked)	100 g	9.2	Apricots (dried)	0.5 cup (65 g)	1.7
Shrimps (cooked)	100 g	3.1	Date (dried)	100 g	2.3
Egg (boiled)	1 piece (50 g)	1.0	Spinach (cooked)	1 cup (180 g)	6.4
Soybeans (cooked)	1 cup (172 g)	8.8	Wood ear fungus (soaked in water)	100 g	5.5
Red kidney beans (cooked)	1 cup (171 g)	5.0	Brown rice (boiled)	1 cup (195 g)	1.2
Chickpeas (cooked)	1 cup (164 g)	4.7	Breakfast cereals (added iron)	0.5 cup (40 g)	4.5
Soybean milk film (dried)	100 g	16.5	Oats (cooked)	1 cup (234 g)	2.1