

Iron content of food

Food	Weight	Iron (mg)	Food	Weight	Iron (mg)
Beef (round) (cooked)	100g	2.6	Adzuki beans (cooked)	1 cup* (230g)	4.6
Pork (loin) (cooked)	100g	1.2	Lentils	1 cup (198g)	6.6
Lamb (leg) (cooked)	100g	2.2	Cashew nuts	1 oz. (28g)	1.7
Chicken (thigh) (cooked)	100g	1.3	Sesame	1 Tbsp. (9g)	1.3
Tuna fish (canned in water)	100g	1.5	Peanuts	1 oz. (28g)	1.2
Clams (cooked)	100g	27.9	Raisins	0.5 cup (72g)	1.3
Oysters (cooked)	100g	9.2	Apricots (dried)	0.5 cup (65g)	1.7
Shrimps (cooked)	100g	3.0	Date (dried)	100g	2.3
Egg (boiled)	1 piece (50g)	0.9	Spinach (cooked)	1 cup (180g)	6.4
Soybeans (cooked)	1 cup (172g)	8.8	Wood ear fungus (soaked in water)	100g	5.5
Red kidney beans (cooked)	1 cup (171g)	5.0	Brown rice	1 cup (195g)	1.0
Chickpeas (cooked)	1 cup (164g)	4.7	Oat bran, breakfast cereals	0.5 cup (40g)	1.8
Soybean milk film (dried)	100g	16.5	Oats (cooked)	1 cup (234g)	2.1

* 1 cup is approximately 240ml

- Medical research have revealed that eating too much red meat (beef, pork and lamb, etc.) would increase the risk of colon cancer. World Cancer Research Fund recommended to eat less than 500g red meat (cooked) per week.
- Tea and coffee hinder iron absorption. Avoid these drinks 1 - 2 hours after meals.
- If you suspect you have iron deficiency anemia, always seek advice from your doctor as it is not something to self-diagnose or treat on your own with over-the-counter iron supplements. In fact, iron tablets can affect the absorption of other nutritional minerals and cause gastrointestinal discomforts, apart from the potential to interact with some medications. In severe cases, excessive intake of iron over time can lead to major organ failures or even death.

Reference:

- 1.The Chinese Dietary Reference intakes (2013)
- 2.Centre for Food Safety Nutrient Information Inquiry System
- 3.Hong Kong Red Cross blood transfusion service
- 4.Anaemia: A Public Health Problem Worth Attention. Non-Communicable Diseases Watch, July 2019, chp.dh.hk

Get to Know

Iron

Deficiency Anaemia



Student Health Service Department of Health

Student Health Service website: www.studenthealth.gov.hk

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Function of iron

The main function of iron is to produce heme in the body. Heme is an essential element of red blood cell and is responsible for transporting oxygen to various body tissues. Inadequate iron intake would cause the body to produce insufficient amount of red blood cells, leading to iron deficiency anaemia.

Health impact of iron deficiency anaemia

Picky eating and inappropriate methods to lose weight will cause inadequate iron intake. Due to periodical blood loss during menstruation, female teenagers will have a higher risk of developing iron deficiency than male. People with iron deficiency anaemia tend to be pale, tired and unable to concentrate on their study. Other symptoms include dizziness, poor appetite and weakened immune system.



Prevention

In order to prevent iron deficiency anaemia, it is essential to develop a healthy eating habit and eat according to the “Healthy Eating Food Pyramid”. One should also learn to choose iron-rich food. The recommended daily requirement of iron is as below:

Age	Recommended daily requirements (mg)	
	Male	Female
4-6	10	10
7-10	13	13
11-13	15	18
14-17	16	18
18-49	12	20

Iron-rich food

1. Meat and seafood
 - Beef, pork, lamb, etc.
 - Oyster, shrimp, clam, etc.
2. Egg, dried beans and its products
 - Egg
 - Soybeans, red kidney beans, soybean milk film, etc.
3. Dried fruits
 - Raisins, dried apricots, etc.
4. Nuts, seeds
 - Almonds, sesame, peanuts, cashew nuts, etc.
5. Vegetables
 - Spinach, wood ear fungus etc.
6. Grains
 - Brown rice, oats, etc.
 - Breakfast cereals fortified with iron



Eat iron-rich foods. Meat, eggs, seafood, dark green leafy vegetables, dried fruits, beans and peas are rich sources of iron. Of note, the haem iron in meat and seafood is much more easily absorbed by the body. To enhance the absorption of non-haem iron in plant foods, serve food rich in vitamin C, e.g. oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, kiwi fruit, tomatoes, broccoli, etc. alongside the iron-rich foods.