



Iron, are you getting enough?

Why is iron so important?

Iron is used in pregnancy for growth and in the production of red blood cells in your blood. These red blood cells contain haemoglobin which moves oxygen around your body and to your growing baby to support normal development, especially in their brain.

In the last 3 months of pregnancy your baby needs to collect enough iron to grow and lay down iron stores to use from birth to weaning age.

Am I at risk of low iron?

During pregnancy your body needs more iron than before pregnancy. This may be even higher if you

- are pregnant with more than one child,
- have pregnancies close together,
- have difficulty keeping food down because of nausea or vomiting during your pregnancy or
- had low iron stores before you became pregnant.

Having low iron in your blood can cause Iron Deficiency Anaemia. This means your body is not able to transport enough oxygen in your blood. Low iron levels in your blood can cause

- tiredness, lightheadedness, irritability,
- shortness of breath, headache, poor concentration, hair loss or postnatal depression.

"One in every three pregnant women have Iron Deficiency Anaemia"

Low iron levels in your blood also increases your baby's risk of having

- a low birth weight or early (preterm) delivery
- problems with brain development and growth
- low iron stores at birth and in the first 6 months of life.

How do I know if I have low iron?

At your booking appointment your doctor/midwife will test your blood and will let you know if you need to increase your iron from these results.

What if my iron is low?

Many pregnant women struggle to keep their iron levels up during pregnancy. Food alone may not be enough to increase your iron stores but it is a very good place to start.

"Pregnant women need 16mg of iron every day, this maybe higher if your stores are low"

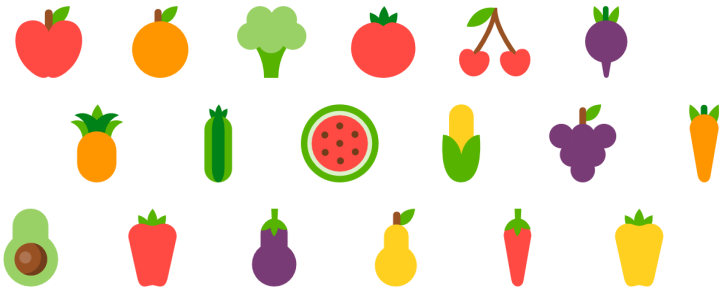
You can improve your iron intake by choosing foods highest in iron in your diet. Iron in food comes in two types; **haem iron and non haem iron.** Haem iron is easiest for your body to absorb and is mostly found in animal meats.

Food source of haem iron	Iron amount
75g lean red meat; beef, pork, lamb	1.8mg
75g (medium sized) chicken breast	0.4mg
1/2 can tinned sardines, drained	1mg
1/2 can tinned salmon, drained	0.6mg
100g Cod	0.1mg
60g (2 small slices) cooked black pudding	7mg

Non haem iron is found in green vegetables, eggs, nuts, seeds, wholemeal rice, pasta or bread as well as fortified breakfast cereals and milk. This type of iron can be difficult to absorb, to help this you need to eat them with foods high in vitamin C.



"Boost your absorption of non haem iron, eat it with foods high in vitamin C like **any colourful fruits, fruit juice or vegetables"**



Food source of non haem iron	Iron amount
Medium bowl (45g) fortified breakfast cereal	
• Bran flakes	5 - 6mg*
• Cheerios/multigrain hoops	5 - 6mg*
• Fruit & Fibre	4 - 6mg*
• All bran	4 - 6mg*
• 2 weetabix	4.5mg*
• Rice krispies/puffed rice	4 - 6mg*
• Shredded wheat	3 - 6mg*
• Corn flakes	4 - 6mg*
*depends on brand. Supermarket own brand products tend to have more iron added - check the label	
30g porridge oats	1mg
30g Readybrek	3.5mg
1 tsp ground cardamom	0.25mg
1 tsp cumin seeds	1.3mg
1 tsp dried ground thyme	1.2mg
100g cooked Tofu	3.5mg
1 tbsp pumpkin seeds	1.2mg
1/4 large can kidney beans	1.4mg
1/2 small can chick peas	1.4mg
1/3 can baked beans	2mg
4 spears of broccoli	1mg
3 tbsp cooked spinach	1.7mg
3 brazil nuts	0.3mg
3 dried apricots	1.2mg
1 tbsp peanut butter	0.4mg
2 slices of wholemeal bread	1.8mg
2 figrolls	0.8mg
2 eggs (average size)	2mg
200mls connacht gold MÓR Milk	2.2mg

Sample meal plan

45g, medium bowl of cheerios with 150mls "MÓR" milk (**7mg iron**), 150ml glass of fruit juice (**vit C**), water
xxx

3 dried apricots (**1.2mg iron**), 2 small mandarin (**vit C**)
xxx

2 slices wholemeal bread (**1.8mg iron**) sandwich with 1/2 can tinned salmon (**0.6mg iron**) 1 tsp low fat mayonnaise, handful low fat cheese, lettuce and tomato (**vit C**) 125g pot low fat yoghurt with 1 tbsp pumpkin seeds (**1.2mg iron**), 2 small kiwi (**vit C**), water
xxx

3 brazil nuts (**0.3mg iron**), 10 cherry tomatoes (**vit C**)
xxx

Chilli con carni made with 75g lean mince, cumin, mixed herbs/thyme 1/4 can kidney beans, tinned tomatoes and peppers (**vit C**) serve with 80g cooked brown rice, water (approx. **5mg iron** per portion)
xxx

2 figrolls (**0.8mg iron**), handful of berries (**vit C**),

Did you know?

- Tannins found in black tea, herbal tea, coffee and cocoa can reduce your body's ability to absorb iron.
- To get the most iron out of your foods, avoid taking these foods/drinks 45-60 minutes before or after taking foods high in iron.

Note: If you have diabetes some of these foods may not be suitable, please check with your diabetes team.