the center
For Naturopathic Medicine & Functional Nutrition

Iron

Iron is an important mineral that helps our bodies perform many necessary tasks. It is key for carrying oxygen in our blood, making energy, and keeping our immune system strong.

Health Benefits

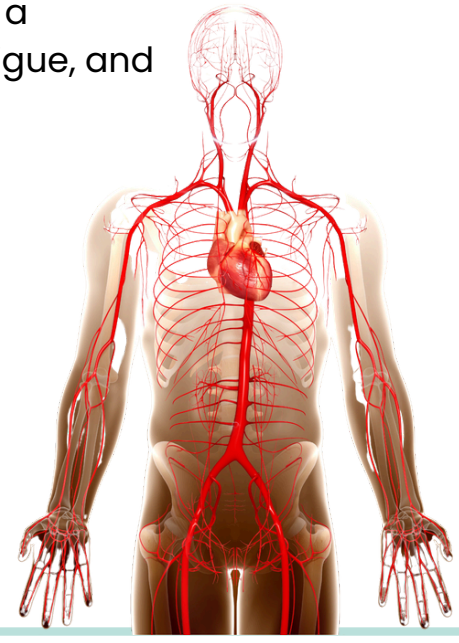
Oxygen transportation: Iron plays a major role in helping our bodies move oxygen around. It is an important part of hemoglobin, which is a protein found in red blood cells. Hemoglobin's job is to pick up oxygen from our lungs and carry it to all the different parts of our body. Without enough iron, our cells can't get the oxygen they need to work properly.

Energy production: Energy production: Iron is crucial for creating energy in our bodies. It helps make a substance called adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which is the main source of energy for all our cells. ATP is like a battery that powers our body's activities, allowing us to move, think, and grow. When we have enough iron, our cells can produce more ATP and keep our energy levels high.

Immune system support: Iron is important for keeping our immune system strong and healthy. Our immune system is like a defense system that helps fight off harmful germs and infections. Iron helps immune cells grow and function properly, which makes it easier for our bodies to fend off illnesses. When we have enough iron, our immune system is better equipped to protect us from getting sick.

Reduce the Risk of Iron Deficiency: Vitamin C plays a critical role in iron absorption and utilization in the body. Iron deficiency is a common nutritional deficiency and can lead to anemia, fatigue, and other health problems.

While iron is present in many foods, it can be more challenging to absorb from plant-based sources compared to animal-based sources. Plant-based sources of iron, such as beans, lentils, spinach, and fortified cereals, contain non-heme iron, which is not as easily absorbed as the heme iron found in animal-based sources. Vitamin C can enhance the absorption of non-heme iron by converting it to a more easily absorbed form in the gut.



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Food Sources*

Beef liver (3 oz): 5.2 mg

Cooked oysters (3 oz): 3.9 mg

Chicken liver (3 oz): 3.5 mg

Cooked spinach (1/2 cup): 3.2 mg

Lentils (1/2 cup, cooked): 3.3 mg

Tofu (1/2 cup): 3.4 mg

Chickpeas (1/2 cup, cooked): 2.4 mg

Red meat (3 oz): 2-3 mg

Kidney beans (1/2 cup, cooked): 2.1 mg

Pumpkin seeds (1 oz): 4.2 mg









Note: The DV values are based on a 2000-calorie diet for healthy adults. DV values may be different for children, pregnant women, or individuals with certain medical conditions.

Recommended Dietary Allowance*

The daily amount of iron required depends on age, sex, and life stage.

Here are the general recommendations:

- Adult men (19-50 years): 8 mg/day
- Adult women (19-50 years): 18 mg/day
- Pregnant women: 27 mg/day
- Adult men and women (51+ years): 8 mg/day

*Retrieved from https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional/