

What Foods Can I Eat? I have Iron Deficiency Anaemia.

What is iron and why do I need it?

Iron is a mineral essential in the diet to form healthy blood. It forms haemoglobin which helps to transport oxygen round the body. If you are anaemic you will probably feel tired, breathless and will look pale.

How can improve my iron intake in my diet?

Certain foods are particularly good sources of iron. They can be divided in to 2 groups.

Haem Iron Foods

These come from animal sources and very well absorbed by the body. They are the most efficient sources of iron.

- **Meat** - especially red meat such as beef, lamb, pork, corned beef. Try to eat 2-3 times per week.
- **Liver** - Try to eat once per week. NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PREGNANT WOMEN.
- **Canned fish** such as sardines and pilchards.

Non-haem iron foods

These are from non animal sources and tend to be less well absorbed by the body. They are still good sources of iron.

- **Eggs**
- **Dark Green Vegetables** such as spring cabbage, broccoli, spinach
- **Beans and pulses** such as baked beans, butter beans, lentils
- **Breakfast cereals and bread.** Look for fortified cereals with added iron such as Weetabix, Ready Brek, Cornflakes
- **Dried fruit** such as apricots, figs, sultanas

If you are vegetarian you need to eat plenty of these foods to help to increase your iron intake as much as possible.

Are there any other foods I can eat which might help?

Vitamin C helps the body to absorb iron especially from the foods rich in non-haem iron. If you eat food rich in vitamin C with a meal it will help you to get the most iron.

The following foods are good sources of vitamin C

- **Citrus fruits** including fruit juices
- **Fresh or frozen vegetables**
- **Fresh salads**
- **Potatoes**

However make sure you don't over cook vegetables as this will destroy the vitamin C. Cook vegetables in a small quantity of boiling water for a short period of time. Frozen vegetables are a good source of vitamin C. Follow the cooking instructions on the packet.

Will any foods stop me absorbing vitamin C?

Yes! Strong tea and coffee will affect how well you absorb iron. Try to drink these separately from your meal. Also added bran will have the same effect.

Should I take any iron tablets?

It is better to get your iron from natural every day foods. Do not take iron tablets unless advised by your doctor, particularly if you are pregnant.

So What is a Healthy Diet?

A healthy diet contains a wide variety of foods. Try to follow the "Balance of Good Health" and remember to include the iron containing foods.

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