

Food Sources of Iron (UK)

Information about Iron

- | Iron is an important mineral which that has many important roles in the body.
- | Iron is needed to help move oxygen around your body.
- | Low levels of iron in your body can cause iron-deficiency anaemia which can lead to tiredness, reduced ability to work and concentrate and an increased risk of infections.
- | Your body takes up more iron if you have a diet including plenty of vitamin C, however it is not known if this increase affects iron status.
- | It takes up less iron from your meal if there are other things such as tannins found in tea and red wine, and foods high in phytates such as whole grains and beans in it.

How Much Iron Should I Aim For?

<i>Gender/stage of life cycle</i>	<i>Recommended intake mg/day</i>	<i>Do not exceed intake of mg/day*</i>
Females 11-18	14.8	44
Males 11-18	11.3	44
Females 19-50	14.8	44
Males 19-50	8.7	44
Males/Females 50+	8.7	44

COMA (1991). *Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals (2003). Public Health England (2016).

Those at risk of iron deficiency include pregnant women, teenage girls, those with high menstrual losses and those consuming a diet high in foods that stop the body absorbing it.

Iron Content of Some Common Foods

- | Most people should be able to get all the iron they need by eating a varied and balanced diet.
- | You can find iron in both animal and plant foods.
- | Animal sources called haem iron are found in meat and fish. Our bodies easily absorb this type of iron.
- | Plant sources called non-haem iron are found in cereals, dried beans, peas and lentils and some fruits and vegetables.
- | In the UK flours, breakfast cereals and many infant foods are fortified with iron.
- | Our bodies absorb plant (non-haem) sources of iron better if they are taken along with meat and fish (haem iron)
- | Vegetarians may need twice as much iron from plant sources in their diet than people who eat meat and fish.

The following table will show you which foods are a source of iron.

<i>Food</i>	<i>Amount of iron mg/100g</i>	<i>Amount of iron in an average serving</i>
<i>Meat, meat products and meat alternatives</i>		
Black pudding*	12.3	2 slices = 7.4mg
Liver - calf (fried)*	12.2	2 slices = 9.8mg
Kidney - lamb (fried)	11.2	1 whole = 3.9mg
Liver pate*	5.9	35g = 2.1mg
Steak - rump (grilled)	3.6	8oz = 5.9mg
Beef - topside (roasted)	2.9	2 thick slices = 2.6mg
Beef mince (stewed)	2.7	140g = 3.8mg
Duck (roasted)	2.7	breast and wing = 5.4mg

Beef burgers (grilled)	2.5	1 (cooked) = 2.0mg
Corned beef	2.4	2 thin slices = 1.8mg
Lamb chops (grilled)	2.1	2 chops (edible portion only) = 2.9mg
Tofu (steamed, fried)	3.5	1/2 pack - 6.9mg
<i>Fish and shellfish</i>		
Cockles (boiled)	28.0	75g = 21mg
Winkles (boiled)	10.2	75g = 7.7mg
Mussels (boiled)	6.8	75g = 5.1mg
Whitebait (fried)	5.1	80g = 4.1mg
Anchovies (canned in oil)	4.1	50g tin = 2.1mg
Sardines (canned in tomato sauce)	2.9	120g tin = 3.5mg
Pilchards (canned in tomato sauce)	2.5	155g tin = 3.9mg
Tuna (canned in oil)	1.6	½ can = 1.5mg
<i>Cereals and cereal products</i>		
Bran flakes - fortified	24.3	40g = 9.7mg
Instant oat or wheat biscuit breakfast cereal - fortified	11.9	40g = 4.8mg
Flaked corn or puffed rice cereal - fortified	7.9	40g = 3.2mg
Oatcakes	4.5	2 oatcakes = 0.90mg

Chapatti	2.3	55g = 1.3mg
Wheat flour - white, fortified	2.0	---
Bread - white, wholemeal	1.5 - 2.8	2 medium slices = 1.1 - 2.0mg
<i>Dairy and egg</i>		
Hen eggs (boiled)	2.0	1 medium = 1mg
<i>Fruits and vegetables</i>		
Figs (dried)	4.2	2 figs = 1.3mg
Raisins	3.8	1 tbsp = 1.1mg
Apricots (dried)	3.4	3 fruits = 1.0mg
Lentils - green, red (boiled)	2.4 - 3.5	120g = 2.9 - 4.2mg
Prunes (canned)	2.2	½ can = 4.4mg
Watercress	2.2	80g serving = 1.8mg
Spinach (raw)	2.1	80g serving = 1.7mg
Red kidney beans (canned)	2.0	½ tin = 4.0mg
Curly kale (boiled)	2.0	80g serving = 1.6mg
Hummus	1.9	50g = 1.0mg
Peas (boiled)	1.6	80g serving = 1.3mg
New potatoes (boiled in skins)	1.6	3 medium = 2.9mg
Baked beans	1.4	½ can = 2.8mg

<i>Nuts and seeds</i>		
Sesame seeds	10.4	1 tbsp = 1.2mg
Cashew nuts	6.2	20 whole = 1.2mg
Hazelnuts	3.2	20g = 0.6mg
<i>Miscellaneous</i>		
Liquorice allsorts	7.6	small bag = 4.3mg
Bombay mix	3.8	30g = 1.1mg
Plain chocolate	2.3	50g bar = 1.2mg

Source: McCance & Widdowson (2002). The Composition of Foods Sixth summary edition. Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry.

*pregnant women are advised to avoid liver and liver products



Notes

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