

Dietary Sources of Iron

Iron is an essential component of hemoglobin, an erythrocyte protein that transfers oxygen from the lungs to the tissues. Iron is also necessary for growth, development, normal cellular functioning, and synthesis of some hormones and connective tissue.

Dietary iron has two main forms: heme and nonheme. Plants and iron-fortified foods contain nonheme iron only, whereas meat, fish, and poultry contain both heme and nonheme iron.

Table 1: Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for Iron [5]

Age	Male	Female	Pregnancy	Lactation
Birth to 6 months	0.27 mg*	0.27 mg*		
7-12 months	11 mg	11 mg		
1-3 years	7 mg	7 mg		
4-8 years	10 mg	10 mg		
9-13 years	8 mg	8 mg		
14-18 years	11 mg	15 mg	27 mg	10 mg
19-50 years	8 mg	18 mg	27 mg	9 mg
51+ years	8 mg	8 mg		

* Adequate Intake (AI)

RDA for Iron for Vegetarians	
Women 19-50	32.4mg
Women 50+	14.4mg
Men 19+	14.4mg

Source: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional/>

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Table 2: Selected Food Sources of Iron [17]

Food	Milligrams per serving	Percent DV*
Breakfast cereals, fortified with 100% of the DV for iron, 1 serving	18	100
Oysters, eastern, cooked with moist heat, 3 ounces	8	44
White beans, canned, 1 cup	8	44
Chocolate, dark, 45%-69% cacao solids, 3 ounces	7	39
Beef liver, pan fried, 3 ounces	5	28
Lentils, boiled and drained, ½ cup	3	17
Spinach, boiled and drained, ½ cup	3	17
Tofu, firm, ½ cup	3	17
Kidney beans, canned, ½ cup	2	11
Sardines, Atlantic, canned in oil, drained solids with bone, 3 ounces	2	11
Chickpeas, boiled and drained, ½ cup	2	11
Tomatoes, canned, stewed, ½ cup	2	11
Beef, braised bottom round, trimmed to 1/8" fat, 3 ounces	2	11
Potato, baked, flesh and skin, 1 medium potato	2	11
Cashew nuts, oil roasted, 1 ounce (18 nuts)	2	11
Green peas, boiled, ½ cup	1	6
Chicken, roasted, meat and skin, 3 ounces	1	6
Rice, white, long grain, enriched, parboiled, drained, ½ cup	1	6
Bread, whole wheat, 1 slice	1	6
Bread, white, 1 slice	1	6
Raisins, seedless, ¼ cup	1	6
Spaghetti, whole wheat, cooked, 1 cup	1	6
Tuna, bluefin, fresh, cooked with dry heat, 3 ounces	1	6
Turkey, roasted, breast meat and skin, 3 ounces	1	6
Nuts, pistachio, dry roasted, 1 ounce (49 nuts)	1	6
Broccoli, boiled and drained, ½ cup	1	6
Egg, hard boiled, 1 large	1	6
Rice, brown, long or medium grain, cooked, 1 cup	1	6
Cheese, cheddar, 1.5 ounces	0	0
Cantaloupe, diced, ½ cup	0	0
Mushrooms, white, sliced and stir-fried, ½ cup	0	0
Cheese, cottage, 2% milk fat, ½ cup	0	0
Milk, 1 cup	0	0

* DV = Daily Value. DVs were developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help consumers compare the nutrient contents of products within the context of a total diet. The DV for iron is 18 mg for adults and children age 4 and older. Foods providing 20% or more of the DV are considered to be high sources of a nutrient.