

Fast Track Your Nutrition

Iron Supplements

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Iron Supplements

Only take supplements if medical lab work shows that you are iron deficient. Too much iron is harmful. If your doctor suggests that you take Iron supplements, be sure that you have blood work done 3-6 months after starting the supplement, so s/he can see how well the supplement is working. If your body's iron stores are back to normal, you should stop taking the supplements. If your symptoms come back, have more blood work done **before** you take supplements again.

There is NO benefit to taking Iron supplements if your Iron stores are normal! In fact, this can be very harmful, especially to your liver and heart.

Supplements are usually in a form of Iron called "ferrous" salts. There are 3 major kinds:

- Ferrous fumarate
- Ferrous gluconate
- Ferrous sulphate

A therapeutic level of iron is 30 mg *elemental* iron taken 1 to 3 times a day. Elemental iron is the amount that your body can use to help build your iron stores back up to a normal level for you. Your doctor will let you know how much Iron to take based on your current lab values.

Ferrous sulphate is inexpensive and readily available, but can be hard on the stomach and cause constipation. Ferrous fumarate or ferrous gluconate may be better tolerated.

Supplements of Iron are absorbed best on an empty stomach – but if they bother your

stomach, take them with a meal. If you add foods high in Vitamin C, or add meat to the meal, the absorption of the iron in the supplements will increase.

Food Sources of Iron

You can use the chart below to fill your meals with iron-rich foods.

<u>Food</u>	<u>Serving Size</u>	<u>mg</u>
beef liver	85-115 g	7.5-10.0
fortified cereal	125 ml	6.2
beans, lentils	125 ml	3.0+
seeds	125 ml	3.0+
tofu	125 ml	3.0+
fish (shell)	85-115 g	3.0-4.0
pork, ham	85-115 g	2.7-3.6
beef, lamb, veal	85 -115g	2.5-3.3
prunes	10	2.5
dried legumes	125 ml	2.2
spinach, greens, peas	125 ml	1.5
strawberries	250 ml	1.5
raisins	125 ml	1.5
apricots, dates (dried)	10	1.5
chicken	85-115 g	1.2-1.6
fish (fin)	85-115 g	0.9-1.2
bread	1 slice	0.7
pasta	125 ml	0.7
oatmeal, cooked	125 ml	0.7

Store your Iron Supplements Safely. Children can be seriously harmed if they take Iron pills by mistake.

Iron supplements can reduce the action of some medication. Be sure your doctor knows you are on Iron if s/he prescribes any medication for you. Sometimes just taking the Iron at a different time of the day from the other pills will eliminate potential problems.