

Adolescent-Young Adult Medicine

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IRON: THE ENERGY MINERAL

The very important mineral called IRON sits within the center of hemoglobin molecules within your red blood cells. Hemoglobin carries oxygen to all parts of your body. When iron levels are low, the amount of hemoglobin may drop, along with a decrease in oxygen delivery to your tissues. You may begin to experience fatigue, headaches, or irritability. The best sources of iron in your diet come from animal products, but many vegetables, whole grains, nuts, peas and beans are also very good sources of iron.

Iron absorption is ENHANCED by:

- Vitamin C-rich foods like citrus fruits, melon, tropical fruits, potato and tomato
- Eating animal and vegetable sources of iron together
- Eating foods cooked in cast iron pots, pans, or casseroles

Iron absorption is INHIBITED by:

- Caffeinated drinks like tea and coffee
- Calcium supplements taken at the same time

Strive to **include 15-20 mg. of iron in your diet** each day. Consult *The Complete Book of Vitamin and Mineral Counts* (and *The Complete Book of Food Counts*), both by Corinne Netzer, to find out the content of all nutrients (including iron) in many, many foods.

Good sources of iron (at least 1-3 mg. per average serving) include:

Red meat (lean)	Spinach, broccoli, brussel sprouts
Poultry (chicken and turkey)	Baked potato with skin; brown rice
Pork, lamb, veal	Avocado; molasses (blackstrap)
Liver (but very high in cholesterol)	Lentils, peas, beans, garbanzos
Egg yolk (also high in cholesterol)	Nuts and seeds; soybeans
Clams, oysters, shrimp	Raisins and other dried fruit
Halibut, salmon, tuna, flounder, swordfish	Whole grains, barley, wheat germ

A great way to start each day is to have iron-fortified cereal (such as Total or Frosted Mini-Wheats or on cold days, Cream of Wheat), with skim milk and orange juice or other citrus fruit...also **Check the Nutrition Facts Label** on other packaged foods to find additional food items you like which provide a *high percent* of your daily iron requirement.

If an iron supplement is recommended by your doctor, because YOU ARE DEFICIENT IN IRON, a good choice is FERRO-SEQUELS. You will be advised to take one or two tabs daily (each tabs contains 50-65 mg. of elemental iron), usually for several months. During this time you should also try to increase your intake of iron from the foods listed above, so you will not need an iron supplement in the future.