

Dietary Iron

So, you need to boost your iron intake...How much should you aim for?

Children 1-3 years: 9mg/day

4-8 years: 10mg/day

Girls 9-13 years: 8mg/day

Girls 14-18 years: 15mg/day

Boys 9-13 years: 8mg/day

Boys 14-18 years: 11mg/day

So let's look how we can meet these targets:

First let's look at meat sources. These contain "Heme" iron.

This form of iron is most easily absorbed by the body.

Compared to a plant-based food with the same amount of iron in it, your body will absorb more from animal sources.

The best animal sources of iron are:



Kangaroo

(100g cooked = 4.4mg)



Sardines

(120g = 3.24mg)



LEAN beef

(100g cooked = 3.1mg)



LEAN lamb

(100g cooked = 2.7mg)

Other good meat sources are:

Chicken liver (100g cooked = 11mg)

Lean pork (100g cooked = 1.4mg)

Tuna (100g = 1.0mg)

Chicken (100g cooked = 0.9mg)

What about other sources of iron?

Iron can be found in a variety of plant foods, however these contain the "non-heme" version of iron. This version is not absorbed as well by the body. Regardless, it is possible to meet your iron needs from a plant-based diet with some careful planning.



Chickpeas

(100g = 6.2mg)



Tofu

(100g = 5.2mg)



Baked beans

(140g = 2.24mg)



Kidney beans

(1/2 cup = 2.1mg)



Oats made with water

(1 cup = 1.3mg)



Spinach

(1/2 cup = 2.2mg)



Cooked silverbeet
(1/2 cup = 1.3mg)



Green beans
(1/2 cup = 1mg)



Egg
(1 egg = 1.1mg)



Beetroot
(3 slices = 1.2mg)



Mixed nuts
(50g = 2.0mg)

Note that wholegrain foods and brown rice contain more iron than white sources.

What can you do to boost your iron absorption?

First let's look at some combinations that help increase your absorption of iron:

- Generally having a good vitamin A status
- Eating vitamin C foods with iron rich foods (or supplements)
- Cook plant foods to increase the absorption of non-heme iron

On the flip side, there are things that can block iron absorption:

- Tea and coffee
- Calcium (from dairy foods or supplements)
- Soy products
- Fibre (in food or supplements)