



## Food Sources: Iron

Iron is a mineral found naturally in a variety of foods and added to others. The amount of iron absorbed from food depends on whether the iron is in a heme or nonheme form. Heme iron comes from animal food sources and is well absorbed by the body, but accounts for only about 10% of iron in the diet. Nonheme iron is found in both plant and animal foods. It is absorbed less readily, but accounts for the majority of dietary iron.

Iron plays an important role in hundreds of processes in the body, particularly oxygen transport and energy production. Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in the world and can cause anemia, a condition that affects the transport of oxygen throughout the body.

The Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for iron is as follows:

- **Females, ages 19-50:** 18 mg per day
- **Females, ages 51+:** 8 mg per day
- **Females (pregnant), ages 19-50:** 27 mg per day
- **Females (lactating), ages 19-50:** 9 mg per day
- **Males, ages 19+:** 8 mg per day

Food, Standard Serving Size	Average Iron Content (mg)
Breakfast cereal (fortified with 100% Daily Value), $\frac{3}{4}$ cup	18
Organ meats (liver, giblets, etc.), 3 ounces	5.2 - 10.9*
Oysters (steamed), 3 ounces/6 medium	7.8*
Tofu (raw), 3 ounces	6.6
Mussels (steamed), 3 ounces	5.7*
Soybeans, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	4.4
White beans (canned), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	3.9
Blackstrap molasses, 1 Tbsp	3.5
Lentils, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	3.3
Spinach (cooked), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	3.2
Beef chuck roast (braised), 3 ounces	2.7*
Kidney beans, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2.6
Sardines (Atlantic, canned), 3 ounces	2.5*
Clams (steamed), 3 ounces	2.4*
Pumpkin seeds (roasted), 1 ounce/ $\sim\frac{1}{4}$ cup	2.3

\*Good source of heme iron

### References

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements. Iron. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional/>. Updated July 9, 2019. Accessed July 16, 2019.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Nutrient Data Laboratory. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Legacy Version. Current: April 2018. Internet: <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>. Accessed July 16, 2019.
3. Oregon State University, Linus Pauling Institute, Micronutrient Information Center. Iron. <https://lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/minerals/iron>. Reviewed May 2016. Accessed July 16, 2019.