

5 Tips for Eating Healthy with Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA)

1. Eat More Lean Meats¹

Unlike fad diets, you don't have to cut out meats to have a nutritious meal. The body absorbs iron from meat better than any other food sources. Shake up your diet with a variety of lean red meat, seafood, pork and poultry, all rich sources of iron.

2. Up Your Intake of Iron-Rich Veggies²

On top of the many other health benefits veggies offer, they're also a great source of iron. Spinach, broccoli, collard greens, kale, romaine lettuce – the list goes on. Boost your leafy green salad with even more iron by adding almonds, walnuts, raisins or dried apricots.

3. Nix the Foods that Prevent Absorption of Iron³

Some foods, like milk, coffee or tea, can actually block your body from absorbing iron. While you don't have to stop eating them completely, you should avoid consuming them with your iron-rich meals.

4. Pair Iron-Rich Foods with Vitamin C⁴

Adding a glass of orange juice with your breakfast can easily double the amount of iron your body absorbs. Consider adding other foods high in vitamin C, like chili and bell peppers, to your daily meals to increase your iron intake.

5. Break Out the Cast Iron Skillet⁵

Whoever thought that an iron pot could help boost the nutritional value in the foods you eat? Twenty minutes of simmering spaghetti sauce in an iron skillet can increase its iron content nine fold. This little trick works well for other acidic foods too.

Cheat Chart: Dietary Sources of Iron⁶

Food, Standard Amount	Iron (mg)	Calories
*Fortified dry cereals (various), about 1 oz	1.8 to 21.1	54 to 127
Organ meats (liver, giblets), cooked, 3 oz	5.2 to 9.9	134 to 235
*Fortified instant cooked cereals (various), 1 packet	4.9 to 8.1	Varies
*Soybeans, mature, cooked, ½ cup	4.4	149
*Spinach, cooked from fresh, ½ cup	3.2	21
Beef, chuck, blade roast, cooked, 3 oz	3.1	215
Beef, bottom round, cooked, 3 oz	2.8	182
*Kidney beans, cooked, ½ cup	2.6	112
*Prune juice, ¾ cup	2.3	136
Ground beef, 15% fat, cooked, 3 oz	2.2	212

Food Sources of iron are ranked by milligrams of iron per standard amount; also calories in the standard amount.

*These are non-heme iron sources. To improve absorption, eat these with a vitamin-C rich food.

a = High in cholesterol.

You should always talk to your health care provider before making any changes to your diet and exercise routine.

¹ Lliades, C., MD. "Why Iron-Rich Foods Are Important". EverydayHealth.com. <http://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition-pictures/do-you-have-an-iron-rich-diet.aspx#/slide-1>. Accessed 3/28/13.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ University of Georgia Health Center. "Iron Facts". <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/nutrition/iron.html>. Accessed 3/29/13.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nutrition for Everyone, Chart: Dietary Sources of Iron. <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/vitamins/iron.html>. Accessed 3/28/13.