

# NUTRITION & Iron

Iron is one of the body's most important elements. Iron helps make hemoglobin, the red substance in the blood that carries oxygen.

Iron also helps your body obtain energy from food. A deficiency in iron can cause fatigue, shortness of breath, rapid heart rate, and depression.

Good nutrition is important in everyone's life - especially to a blood donor. Iron is a major ingredient to good nutrition.

At the blood collection site, your blood will be checked to determine if your red cells are adequate for donation. Low counts may indicate the

need for iron supplementation.

The Food and Nutrition Board recommends a daily intake of 8 mg of iron for men and women.

Bleeding is the number one reason for low iron or anemia in adults. Iron loss may result from peptic ulcer, hiatal hernia, diverticulosis, cancer, menstrual period, etc. Also, pounding of the feet from running or walking and excessive sweating cause iron loss.

Red Cross iron level requirements make sure you can spare a pint of blood. The requirements also mean that each patient receives an iron-rich blood transfusion.

Your iron level changes constantly depending on your food intake and your physical activity level. Not passing this iron test does not mean you are unhealthy. Modifying your eating habits to include iron-rich foods should enable you to donate blood in a few weeks.



**American  
Red Cross**

The need is constant.  
The gratification is instant.  
Give blood.™

Nutrition is the food you eat and how your body uses it. You need food to get energy for work and play, to move, to breath - just to stay alive. Food also provides a variety of nutrients that help build and repair tissues so your body will function well.

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# TIPS:

## Maintaining the Iron Levels in Your Blood

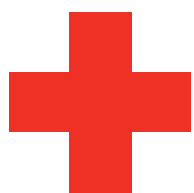
• **Combine Foods Rich in Vitamin C with Foods Rich in Iron:** Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron. It can be found in citrus fruits/juices, kiwi, cantaloupe, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, cabbage, spinach, beets and leafy greens such as turnip, and collard greens.

• **Cook in Cast Iron:** As your food cooks, it will pick up iron from the cookware.

• **Drink Water and Avoid Coffee and Tea:** Tannins in coffee and tea can block the absorption of iron. Drinking lots of water has countless benefits.

• **Eat Iron-Rich Foods:** Red meat, oysters, clams, soybeans, dried beans, peas and lentils, whole grain cereals and breads, as well as prunes and dried fruits, are excellent sources of iron!

*So eat healthy and share your good health by donating blood.*



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**For more information or to schedule an appointment, call or visit:**

1-800-GIVE-LIFE (448-3543) | [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org)

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