

How Can I Maintain Healthy Iron Levels In My Blood?

• **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!

• **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 and leafy greens such as turnip, beet 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.



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NUTRITION

and *Iron in Your 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.

Iron is one of the body's most important elements. It is needed in small but vital amounts. Iron combines with protein to make hemoglobin, the red substance in the blood that carries oxygen from the lungs to body cells and removes carbon dioxide from those cells.

Iron also helps the cells obtain energy from food. A deficiency in iron can cause listlessness, fatigue, shortness of

breath, rapid heart rate with minimal exertion and depression.

Good nutrition is important in everyone's life - especially to a blood donor - and 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.

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The Food and Nutrition Board recommends a daily intake of 8 mg of iron for men and women. An intake of 18 mg per day is recommended for women during child-bearing years.

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 transfusion.

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



“When people are conscious of eating iron-rich foods, it's easier to maintain an adequate blood supply for everyone. Eat healthy & share your good health by donating blood.”

**For More Information About Donation Opportunities,
Contact Your Local American Red Cross.**

**Call 1.800.GIVE LIFE (448.3543) or visit us at
www.redcrossblood.org**



**American
Red Cross**