

How to increase iron in your diet during pregnancy

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Why is iron important?

Iron is very important in your diet because it is needed to make haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen around your body and to your growing baby.

When you are pregnant, iron absorption is increased from the gut to help you produce enough haemoglobin for you and your baby.

It is therefore important to eat enough iron-rich foods, to prevent you from becoming anaemic and to make sure your baby has enough iron stores when they are born.

What happens if I have low iron levels?

If you cannot make enough haemoglobin, you become anaemic and less oxygen can be carried in your blood.

This can cause symptoms such as:

- Tiredness
- Breathlessness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations

During pregnancy, being anaemic increases your risk of having a baby with a low birth weight and having a premature delivery. It can also cause tiredness after delivery, and your baby could have low iron stores.

If you are anaemic at the time of giving birth, you are more likely to bleed heavily after delivery and more likely to need a blood transfusion.

How can I get more iron in my diet?

A balanced and varied diet should provide enough iron for you and your baby. These foods are particularly good sources of iron:

Animal sources

- Lean red meat
- Turkey
- Chicken
- Oily fish, such as mackerel and sardines
- Eggs



Plant sources

- Pulses, beans and lentils
- Leafy green vegetables, such as spinach, broccoli, watercress and kale
- Dried fruits including apricots, raisins and prunes
- Breakfast cereals
- Nuts
- Wholegrain bread
- Brown rice
- Tofu

Vitamin C helps your body to absorb iron from your diet, so try to include foods rich in Vitamin C with every meal to get the most from the foods you eat.

Good sources of Vitamin C include oranges, lemons, blackcurrants, tomatoes and fruit juices. Tea, coffee and milk can reduce absorption of iron, so avoid drinking these with or soon after meals.



If taking iron tablets or multivitamins, take them with a glass of fresh orange juice.

What if I am vegetarian or vegan?

Iron from non-animal sources is harder for the body to absorb, but most people eating a well balanced diet are still able to get enough iron.

Do I need to take iron tablets?

Your doctor or midwife will tell you if they think it would be beneficial for you to start taking iron tablets. They will give you guidance on how many tablets you should take each day.

While taking iron tablets, it is important to still eat a healthy, varied diet. It is also important to take your tablets correctly so your body can absorb the iron. The best way to take them is on an empty stomach, one hour before meals and with a source of Vitamin C (such as orange juice).

If you get side effects from the iron tablets, tell your doctor or midwife so they can discuss this with you.

Where can I get more information?

You can find more information on these websites:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/iron-deficiency-anaemia/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-andminerals/iron/>
- <https://patient.info/allergies-blood-immune/anaemialeaflet/diets-suitable-for-people-with-anaemia>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowałiby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。