

# Getting iron from food

## Nourish Spotlight

### ANEMIA

Iron is an essential mineral involved in vital processes in the body including transportation of oxygen. Our body cannot produce iron on its own, therefore we have to get it from food or supplements. Iron supplements come in many different forms and dosages, some of which are easier on your digestion. Talk to your pharmacist, doctor, or dietitian before taking iron supplements.

## Types of Iron



There are two types of iron in food.

**Heme iron** is found in animal products such as red meat, poultry, fish and sea food. This type of iron is more easily absorbed by our body.



**Non-heme iron** is found in plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, grain products, legumes, dried fruits as well as nuts and seeds, and it is less readily absorbed by our body.

### FIND OUT HOW MUCH IRON YOU NEED

AGE	AIM FOR AN IRON INTAKE OF	DO NOT GO OVER* (including iron from supplement)
Men 19 years +	8 mg/day	45 mg/day
Women 19-50 years	18 mg/day	45 mg/day
Women 51 years +	8 mg/day	45 mg/day

\* A prescription for an iron supplement can sometimes exceed these amounts. Please follow advice of your healthcare team.



## SOME GOOD SOURCES OF IRON

<b>HIGH SOURCE OF IRON</b> (more than 7 mg per portion)	Serving size
Pork, lamb, chicken liver	90 g
Lamb kidneys	90 g
Blood sausage	90 g
Some cold cereal with added iron	250 ml
Duck breast	90 g
<b>GOOD SOURCE OF IRON</b> (4 to 7 mg per portion)	Serving size
Beef liver	90 g
Oysters	90 g
Most legumes, beans	250 ml
Mussels	90 g
Pumpkin seeds/kernels, roasted	60 ml
<b>SOURCE OF IRON</b> (2 to 3 mg per portion)	Serving size
Beef	90 g
Veal	90 g
Quinoa, cooked	175 ml
Edamame	125 ml
Spinach, cooked	125 ml
Tofu*, firm or extra firm, cooked	150 g

\*prepared with calcium sulphate and magnesium chloride  
Source: The Canadian Nutrient File (CNF)

For food that have a label, look for iron in the nutrition facts table. Iron may be listed in mg per portion, or with the percent daily value (% DV). **5% DV or less means “little”, 15% DV or more means the food contains “a lot” of iron.**

For foods without label, check the [Canadian Nutrient File](#)

## Supercharged chili

Beans, beef, spinach, and molasses provide iron in this easy recipe.

### Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef, browned, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (540ml) black beans
- 1 can (540ml) diced tomatoes
- 1 cup onions, diced
- 1 cup zucchini, diced
- 1 bag spinach
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 2 tbsp molasses
- 2 tbsp cumin
- 4 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 2 tbsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp oregano

### Preparation

In a stock pot or Dutch oven, brown the beef. When cooked, drain the fat. Add all other ingredients and let simmer on low for 30 minutes.

## Links

- [Iron in food](#)
- [How to get more iron](#)

### ENDORSED BY



### AUTHORS

Megan Morrison RD, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Toronto, Ontario  
Stéphanie Pasaman RD, University of Montreal Health Centre (CHUM), Montreal, Quebec  
Registered Dietitians from InspireHealth Supportive Cancer Care, Vancouver, British Columbia

### DISCLAIMER

The information in this publication is not intended as medical advice nor should it replace advice, expertise and information given by a member of your healthcare team.

*Nourish Spotlight* is a publication of the *Nourish: Canada's Nutrition Companion for Oncology Patients and Caregivers* series: a free resource developed by registered dietitians, available in print and online [www.nourishonline.ca](http://www.nourishonline.ca)

Made possible through an educational grant provided by

