

Getting Enough Iron During Pregnancy

Iron is important for healthy blood during pregnancy. Pregnant women need **15mg Iron every day**. A diet lacking in iron can lead to anaemia (low iron), which can cause you to feel tired and short of breath.

Where do I get Iron from?

There are two types of iron in the food you eat:

- **Haem iron** is more easily absorbed. It is found in meat, chicken and fish.
- **Non-haem iron**, found in eggs, green vegetables, pulses and fortified food, is less well absorbed. Eating foods high in **Vitamin C** (citrus fruit, juices, peppers, tomato, broccoli) improves absorption.
- If you have anaemia, your doctor or midwife may also advise you to take an **iron supplement**.

You can improve your iron intake by:

- Eating a balanced diet with 1 portion of haem-iron food daily
- Include non-haem iron sources (+ vitamin C) each day
- Waiting 30-60 minutes after meals or Iron supplements to eat/drink foods which may reduce iron absorption, such as tea, coffee and dairy.

Haem iron (well absorbed)

Food	Portion	Iron
Meat and poultry		
Lean red meat (beef, lamb, pork)	120g	3mg
Chicken breast	120g	1.3mg
Black pudding	2 small slices (60g)	12mg
Fish		
Tinned sardines (brine)	70g	1.6mg
Tinned salmon	70g	0.4mg
Cod	120g	0.5mg

Non-haem iron (less well absorbed – eat with vitamin C)

Food	Portion	Iron
Poultry		
Egg (hard-boiled)	1	1mg
Cereals and grains		
Oatmeal/ Porridge oats	40g	1.5mg
1 cup fortified breakfast cereal (e.g. Special K, Bran Flakes)	30g	2.4-4.2mg
Wholemeal bread	1 slice	0.9mg
Brown Rice	65g (uncooked)	1mg
Vegetables		
1 small can baked beans	½ tin (200g)	2.7mg
Tofu	60g	0.7mg
Soya beans (boiled)	1 cup (170g)	5mg
Kidney beans (canned)	1 cup (180g)	3.5mg
Lentils (boiled)	1 cup (200g)	5-7mg
Broccoli	1 cup	0.9mg
Kale/Spinach (boiled)	1 cup (100g)	1.7mg
Dried fruit (raisins, apricots, sultanas, prunes)	¼ cup (25g)	0.6mg
Sesame seeds/ Tahini paste	1 tablespoon (19g)	2mg
Cashew nuts	30g	2mg
Hazelnuts	30g	1mg

Adapted from "Best Practice for Infant Feeding in Ireland, FSAI, 2011