



# Dietary Iron Guide

## Before Your Surgery



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### Dietary Iron Guide

This guide is to help you to increase the iron in your body before your surgery.

- Your body needs iron to form hemoglobin (Hb) for red blood cells.
- If you imagine your body is a car, hemoglobin is the part of your blood that moves oxygen (the gas) from your lungs to your body (the engine).
- Ongoing problems with low levels of iron can lead to anemia. Anemia is sometimes called "tired blood".
- If you go into surgery with low iron in your body, it takes longer for your body to get your hemoglobin back to normal levels after surgery.
- Many women don't get enough iron. Eating well-balanced meals will help you to get more iron.

#### How do you know if you have low iron?

- Your doctor can order a blood test that will tell you if you have low levels of iron and if your hemoglobin is normal.

#### How can you get more iron from your foods?

- Iron is found in meat, fish and poultry. This type of iron is called heme iron.
- Iron is also found in bread, cereal, pasta, nuts, eggs, beans, lentils, and some fruit and vegetables. This type of iron is called non-heme iron.
- When you are eating foods that have non-heme iron, it is good to eat foods that are rich in Vitamin C (citrus fruits or juices) at the same time. This helps your body to absorb the non-heme iron.

- Calcium supplements, coffee, tea and some medications may make it more difficult for your body to absorb non-heme iron, so it is better to avoid eating these foods with your meals.
- The list on the back of this guide shows you how much iron is in some common food items.

#### What about iron supplements?

- Most people can get enough iron from food. Iron supplements are sometimes recommended for people who have anemia when blood tests confirm that the anemia is due to low iron stores. Iron supplements should only be taken when advised by your healthcare provider.
- Large amounts of iron can make you sick, especially if you have an illness called hemochromatosis (iron overload), so you should always check with your doctor before using iron supplements.

#### How much iron should you get each day?

- The following table shows the amount of iron that you should have each day.

|          |               |        |
|----------|---------------|--------|
| Children | 1-13 yrs.     | 7-8 mg |
| Males    | 14-18 yrs.    | 11 mg  |
|          | 19 and over   | 8 mg   |
| Females  | 14-18 yrs.    | 15 mg  |
|          | 19-50 yrs.    | 18 mg  |
|          | 51 and over   | 8 mg   |
|          | Pregnancy     | 27 mg  |
|          | Breastfeeding | 9 mg   |

*For all ages, stay below 45 mg/day*

| Food Item                                      | Iron (mg) |
|--|-----------|
| <b>MEAT</b>                                    |           |
| Liver (pork) cooked, 2 ½ oz.                   | 13.4      |
| Liver (chicken, turkey, lamb), cooked, 2 ½ oz. | 6.2 – 6.9 |
| Chili w meat and beans, 1 serving              | 4.5       |
| Roast beef sandwich                            | 4.0       |
| Pizza with meat, 2 slices                      | 4.0       |
| Spaghetti with meatballs, 1 cup                | 3.9       |
| Steak medium (4 ½ oz. cooked)                  | 3.4       |
| Roast beef, lean, 2 slices, 3 oz.              | 2.5       |
| Cabbage rolls with meat, 2                     | 2.1       |
| Hamburger with one beef patty                  | 2.0       |
| Pastrami, 3 slices                             | 1.3       |
| Pork, lean, cooked, 3 oz.                      | 1.0       |
| Bologna, 2 slices                              | 1.0       |
| Hot dog  | 0.5       |
| Salami, hard, 3 slices                         | 0.5       |
| Pork link sausages, thick, 2 oz.               | 0.4       |
| Bacon, 3 medium slices                         | 0.3       |
| Ham, luncheon, 2 slices, 1 ½ oz.               | 0.3       |
| <b>POULTRY</b>                                 |           |
| ½ whole chicken                                | 2.5       |
| Turkey, light meat, 3 oz.                      | 2.0       |
| Chicken breast, 3 oz.                          | 1.0       |
| Chicken leg/thigh, lean, 3 oz.                 | 1.0       |
| Chicken fingers (6)                            | 0.6       |
| <b>FISH</b>                                    |           |
| Oysters (6)                                    | 4.5       |
| Tuna, 3 oz.                                    | 1.7       |
| Catfish, Haddock, Halibut, M/Mahi              | 1.3       |
| Shrimp, raw, 6 large                           | 1.0       |
| Sardines, 3 whole (3") 1 ¼ oz.                 | 1.0       |
| Salmon, pink, 3 oz.                            | 0.7       |
| Fish portions, in batter, 4 oz.                | 0.6       |
| Cod, Flounder, Sole, Pollock                   | 0.5       |

| Food Item                          | Iron (mg) |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>FISH continued</b>              |           |
| Fish sticks, 4 pieces              | 0.5       |
| <b>GRAINS</b>                      |           |
| Slim Fast bar                      | 4.5       |
| Power Bar protein bar              | 3.1       |
| Pasta, 1 cup cooked                | 2.0       |
| Bagel, plain, 2 oz.                | 1.5       |
| Rice, 1 cup cooked                 | 1.0       |
| Bread with enriched flour, 1 slice | 1.0       |
| Granola bar, average               | 0.5       |
| <b>HOT BREAKFAST CEREALS*</b>      |           |
| Cream of Wheat, cooked, ¾ cup      | 5.7 - 5.8 |
| Oatmeal, cooked, instant, ¾ cup    | 5.1 - 6.3 |
| <b>READY TO EAT CEREALS*</b>       |           |
| Cheerios, regular, 1 cup           | 6.8       |
| Corn Flakes, 1 cup                 | 6.8       |
| Raisin Bran, 1 cup                 | 4.5       |
| Rice Krispies, 1 cup               | 1.8       |
| <b>FRUIT</b>                       |           |
| Apricots, dried, ¼ cup             | 1.6       |
| Fresh/canned, 1 serving            | 1.0       |
| Avocado, 1 medium                  | 1.0       |
| Raisins, 1 oz.                     | 0.7       |
| <b>VEGETABLES</b>                  |           |
| Cabbage, ½ cup                     | 6.2       |
| Soy beans, ½ cup                   | 4.4       |
| Spinach, cooked, ½ cup             | 3.4       |
| Split peas, cooked, 1 cup          | 2.5       |
| Tomato puree, ½ cup                | 2.4       |
| Asparagus, raw, 6 spears           | 2.1       |
| Beans (baked, pinto, etc), ½ cup   | 2.0       |
| Potato with skin                   | 2.0       |
| Swiss chard, ½ cup                 | 2.0       |
| Beets, canned, ½ cup               | 1.6       |
| Artichoke, cooked, 1 medium        | 1.6       |

| Food Item  | Iron (mg) |
|--|-----------|
| <b>VEGETABLES continued</b>  |           |
| Broccoli, ¾ cup  | 1.4       |
| Beet greens, ½ cup   | 1.4       |
| Tomato sauce, ½ cup  | 1.3       |
| Kale, cooked, ½ cup  | 1.3       |
| Peas, ½ cup  | 1.2       |
| French fries, 3 oz.  | 1.0       |
| Green beans, ½ cup   | 0.8       |
| Mixed vegetables, 1 cup  | 0.7       |
| Bok choy, ½ cup  | 0.7       |
| Chick peas, 7 oz.  | 0.6       |
| Corn, ½ cup  | 0.3       |
| <b>OTHER</b>   |           |
| Tofu, ¾ cup  | 7.3 - 8.0 |
| Lentils, ¾ cup, cooked   | 4.9       |
| Blackstrap molasses, 1 tbsp  | 3.6       |
| Ham & cheese omelet (2 eggs)   | 3.0       |
| Sunflower seeds, ¼ cup   | 2.5       |
| Nuts, without shell, ¼ cup<br>(cashews, almonds, hazelnuts,<br>macadamia, pistachio) | 1.3 – 2.2 |
| Soup w meat, beans, peas, 1 cup  | 1.5       |
| Eggs, 1 large, whole   | 0.7       |
| Soup with noodles & veg., 1 cup  | 0.5       |
| Peanut butter, 1 tbsp.   | 0.5       |
| Cottage cheese, ½ cup  | 0.3       |
| <b>BEVERAGES</b>   |           |
| Ensure, 8 oz.  | 4.5       |
| Boost, 8 oz.   | 3.6       |
| Slim Fast, 10 oz. can  | 2.7       |
| Prune juice, 6 oz.   | 2.5       |
| Soy milk, 1 cup  | 1.0       |
| Chocolate milk, 1 cup  | 0.6       |
| Fruit juice, 1 cup   | 0.5       |
| Milk, 1 cup  | 0.1       |