



## Anemia & Iron Therapy

Many women have anemia during pregnancy due to iron-poor blood. Increasing iron allows your body to make more red blood cells to carry oxygen to your body and baby. Oxygen lets you burn calories for energy, which is why women with low iron have low energy too. If you are already taking a daily prenatal vitamin and still have low iron, there are two things you can do: increase iron content in your diet and/or take iron tablets.

You do not need a prescription to buy iron. It is not important which brand to buy, unless you have a sensitive stomach. “Slow FE” and “Vitron C” are gentle, but more expensive. Do not take an iron tablet together with the prenatal vitamin because your body cannot absorb all the iron at once.

Some women find that iron causes constipation. Follow the instructions in “Medicines for Moms” for avoiding constipation. If you have not had a soft bowel movement in the last 24 hours, skip your iron tablet and take a stool softener instead. Iron can turn stools black. This is normal.

### IRON-RICH FOODS

	Serving Size	Iron (mg)	Calories
<b>CEREALS</b>			
Total, Product 19	1 oz	18	100
Cream of Wheat	1/4 cup	9	115
<b>MEAT</b>			
Beef liver, cooked	3 oz.	5.7	137
Beef sirloin, cooked	3 oz.	2.8	165
Hamburger, cooked (97% fat free)	3 oz.	2.6	149
Pork loin, lean, cooked	3 oz.	1	165
<b>VEGGIES</b>			
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	6.4	41
Peas, cooked	1 cup	2.5	125
Garbanzo beans, cooked	1/2 cup	2.4	134
Soybeans, cooked	1/2 cup	2.3	117
Potato, baked	1 med.	2.2	145
White beans, cooked	1/2 cup	2	104
Lima beans, cooked	1/2 cup	1.8	95
<b>SNACKS (excellent fiber too!)</b>			
Prune Juice, canned	1/2 cup	5.2	99
Figs, dried	4	1.6	154
Dates, dried	4	1.2	104
Strawberries, fresh	3/4 cup	1.1	42

## HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR IRON ABSORPTION

Iron absorption is affected by several factors. Certain foods inhibit iron absorption by your body, while others help it. Follow these hints to get the most out of your supplement:

- Take it on a relatively empty stomach (1-2 hours before or after a meal). If it makes you nauseous, have it with some toast or crackers.
- Take it with Vitamin C, such as orange juice or other citrus fruits.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages at the time you take iron.
- Calcium will decrease iron absorption. Avoid dairy products and high calcium foods within 1-2 hours of your supplement. Check your orange juice to see if it is fortified with calcium.
- Use the following guide to **avoid** taking high calcium foods with your iron. Remember that calcium is important in pregnancy, so be sure to get them at other times throughout the day.

<b>CALCIUM-RICH FOODS</b>			
	<b>Serving Size</b>	<b>Calcium (mg)</b>	<b>Calories</b>
<b>LOW-FAT DAIRY</b>			
Yogurt, nonfat plain	8 oz	452	100
Ricotta cheese, part skim	½ cup	335	170
Milk, skim	1 cup	300	86
Cheddar, reduced fat	1 oz	220	90
Jarlsberg, lite	1 oz	220	80
<b>FISH</b>			
Canned sardines, oil packed, drained	3 ¼ oz	406	221
Mackerel, canned	4 oz	273	177
Salmon, canned, liquids and solids	3 oz	242	158
<b>VEGETABLES &amp; NUTS</b>			
Collard greens, frozen, cooked	1 cup	358	62
Spinach, fresh, cooked, drained	1 cup	244	41
Tofu, firm, uncooked	4 oz	232 (2.1 mg iron)	164
Kale, frozen, cooked	1 cup	179	39
Broccoli, fresh, steamed	1 cup	178	46
Almonds	½ oz.	37	82