

# Are you getting enough iron?

## Are you low in iron?



If you lack energy you may be low in iron. Symptoms of iron deficiency are subtle and can be mistaken for a busy lifestyle.

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor:

- Tiredness (even after rest)
- Lack of energy
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Frequent infections
- Feeling down

## Why do you need iron?

Iron is used by the body to carry oxygen in the blood.

**iron**



**healthy growth & brain development**

for babies, toddlers and children to grow and develop normally



**wellbeing**

to produce energy from food



**immunity**

for a healthy immune system

## Are you at risk?



Women of childbearing age are at risk of iron deficiency.

Iron deficiency is more common in women who:

- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have heavy periods
- Don't eat much meat

## What is the role of supplements?

The best way to prevent iron deficiency is to eat iron-rich foods regularly.

If you are iron deficient, your doctor may prescribe an iron supplement to help your iron levels return to normal.

Most people find that once their iron levels have returned to normal, they no longer require supplements. Eating an iron-rich diet will help to maintain healthy iron levels.

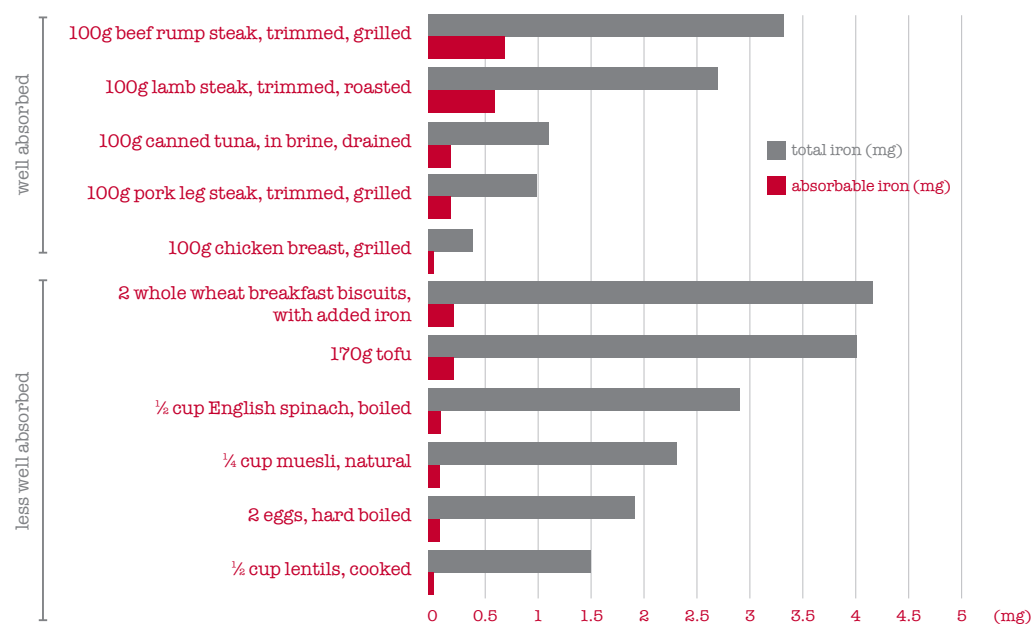


## Which foods contain iron?

There are a number of foods that are high in iron, but the iron in these foods isn't absorbed by the body in the same way.

Iron found in beef, lamb, fish, pork and chicken is well absorbed by the body, whereas iron found in cereals with added iron, tofu, spinach, eggs and legumes is less well absorbed by the body.

The amount of iron you need depends on the type of foods you choose (see graph).



The best sources of iron are beef and lamb as they are high in well absorbed iron. Eating an iron-rich diet which includes 130g of cooked\* beef or lamb every second day is recommended in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

- Beef and lamb contain double the iron in pork, chicken and fish
- The redder the meat, the more iron it contains

\*200g raw weight = 130g cooked weight

## 3 easy steps to an iron-rich diet

### 1: Eat iron-rich foods, including beef and lamb 3 to 4 times a week to meet iron and zinc needs

week 1	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday
week 2	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday

Foods high in iron are also high in zinc, important for growth, development and immunity.

### 2: When having a meal without beef, lamb, pork, chicken or fish, add a vitamin C-rich food. This will increase the amount of iron absorbed from the meal

iron-rich plant foods + 5 strawberries or half orange or medium tomato or 3 broccoli florets = increased iron absorption

### 3: If you drink tea, coffee or cola, have them between meals as they decrease the amount of iron absorbed from the meal



This fact sheet has been produced by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). For more information, visit [www.mlahealthymeals.com.au](http://www.mlahealthymeals.com.au) (April 2016).

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