



AIMING FOR TEN OUT OF TEN

TEN TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR IRON INTAKE

Fatigue, lethargy, frequent infections and reduced resistance to cold. It may surprise you that these commonplace symptoms are often caused by iron deficiency and can be easily avoided by increasing your iron intake.

Thousands of New Zealand women don't get enough iron.

Women, particularly during pregnancy, teenage girls, athletes and vegetarians, are most at risk of being iron deficient.

Follow these ten simple steps to make sure your daily intake is adequate.

1. EAT LEAN RED MEAT REGULARLY FOR TOP IRON INTAKE

There are two types of iron in food: haem iron found in meat and fish and non-haem iron found mainly in plants. Meat also contains some non-haem iron. The body absorbs the haem iron in meat much more efficiently than the non-haem iron in plant foods. For example $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked silverbeet contains 0.5mg of iron, but the body can only use about 5% of this. In comparison, 100 grams of cooked lean beef contains an average of 4.0mg of iron and the body absorbs around 25% of it. You would need to eat around 2kg of cooked silverbeet to get the same amount of iron provided by just 100 grams of lean meat. This equates to a small serving of spaghetti bolognese or a couple small lamb leg steaks.

2. SEE RED

Red meats are richer in haem iron than white meat, poultry and fish, so eat red meat for a top iron intake.

3. GET PLENTY OF VITAMIN C

Vitamin C helps the body to use non-haem iron – the iron in plant foods. Include plenty of fruit, fruit juices or vegetables rich in vitamin C with your meals.

4. EAT RED MEAT AND VEGETABLES TOGETHER

Eat a combination of red meat and plant foods (vegetables, pasta, rice, legumes, fruits). Eating meat with plant foods will also help the body use more of the non-haem iron by up to four times. Examples of iron-rich meals include meat and vegetable stir-fry, a meat sauce with pasta and vegetables, or a lean beef salad sandwich.

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