

## IRON-RICH MEAL IDEAS

The following are examples of everyday foods and meal ideas, which include both iron-rich foods (such as meat and fish) and those which help us use the iron more effectively, eg vitamin C rich-fruit with cereal.

### BREAKFAST

- Bowl of iron-fortified cereal, such as cornflakes with milk, topped with vitamin C-rich fruit, eg kiwifruit **(1.6mg)**
- 2 slices wheatmeal toast with peanut butter and a glass of fruit juice **(1.8mg)**

**TIP:** Drink tea or coffee when you wake up rather than with breakfast, as tea and coffee reduce iron absorption from foods such as cereal and bread.

### LUNCH

- Filled wholemeal roll with lean beef, lettuce, tomato and beetroot **(3.5mg)**
- Pita filled with lean lamb, lettuce, tomato and avocado **(4.3mg)**
- Jacket potato filled with chilli con carne (or baked beans), topped with cheese, with salad **(3.6mg)**
- Egg sandwich using wheatmeal bread, with tomato and parsley **(2.8mg)**

**TIP:** Including meat or fish increases the absorption of non-haem iron from bread and vegetables. Add fresh fruit or diluted fruit juice to maximise iron absorption.

### INDIAN SPICED LAMB AND CHICKPEA CURRY

5.2mg iron/serve  
Visit [recipes.co.nz](http://recipes.co.nz)



***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.***

IRON  
FACT

### DINNER

- Lean beef casserole with potatoes, pumpkin and broccoli **(4.3mg)**
- Spaghetti bolognese **(4.9mg)**
- Lean lamb stir-fry with broccoli, capsicum and noodles, topped with sesame seeds **(4.3mg)**
- Lean beef mince and red kidney beans, wrapped in a tortilla with salad and salsa **(7.3mg)**
- Pizza topped with tuna and capsicum, with a green salad **(4.5mg)**

**TIP:** Fruit desserts such as fresh fruit salad, stewed dried fruit or fruit crumble, help to increase both the iron content and absorption from the meal.

### SNACKS

Snacks can be useful iron-fillers too. Here are some ideas to boost your iron intake further:

- Liver paté on 2 sesame wheat crackers **(2.2mg)**
- 1 slice of wheatmeal bread and marmite **(2.9mg)**
- ¼ cup raw nuts, such as: pistachios **(2.2 mg)**, cashews **(1.7mg)**, almonds **(1.6mg)**, Brazil nuts **(1.0mg)**, walnuts **(1.0mg)**

## FOLLOW THESE TEN SIMPLE STEPS TO MAKE SURE YOUR DAILY INTAKE IS ADEQUATE

### 1. EAT LEAN 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 ¼ cup of cooked silverbeet contains 0.5mg of iron, but the body can only use about 5% of this. In comparison, 120g of cooked lean beef contains an average of 4mg of iron and the body absorbs around 25% of it.

### 2. SEE RED

Red meats are richer in haem iron than white meat, eg poultry and fish, so eat red meat for a top iron intake. Include a moderate portion of lean red meat 3-4 times per week as part of a healthy diet with plenty of vegetables and wholegrains for optimal 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 vitamin C rich fruit or vegetables 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.

### 5. KEEP YOUR MEALS TANNIN FREE

It is best to drink tea and coffee between meals, rather than with your main meals. The tannins in tea and coffee reduces the amount of iron we can absorb from food.

### 6. BEWARE OF DIETING

Studies show girls and women on low calorie diets do not get their daily iron requirements. Remember, lean beef and lamb are relatively low in calories yet high in iron and can be included in any weight reducing diet, particularly as the protein content keeps you full for longer.

### 7. EXTRA IRON FOR EXERCISE

You need extra iron if you exercise strenuously and often. Have your iron levels checked regularly and ensure your diet is balanced and varied, including lots of foods high in haem iron. Iron-rich foods include beef, lamb, kidneys and liver\*.

### 8. DON'T RELY ON SUPPLEMENTS

The iron in pills or supplements and fortified foods such as breakfast cereal is poorly absorbed. Don't rely on these for your total daily iron needs, and only use supplements if advised by your doctor.

### 9. CHOOSE FROM THE FOUR MAIN FOOD GROUPS

A sure way to improve your iron intake is to eat a balanced and healthy diet. Each day you should eat a variety of foods from the four main foods groups: fruits and vegetables, breads and cereals, dairy products and lean meat and alternatives (beans, lentils, eggs or tofu).

### 10. BE EXTRA IRON SMART IF YOU'RE AT RISK

Infants, girls and women who have periods, teenagers, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, sports people, vegetarians and the elderly are most at risk of being iron deficient. Learn how to cook appealing, iron-rich dishes to suit you and your family. Look for ideas on quick and easy beef and lamb dishes.

*\* Whilst pregnant, limit liver intake to 100g/week.*

IRON  
FACT

## BABIES AND TODDLERS NEED LOTS OF IRON BECAUSE THEY ARE GROWING SO RAPIDLY.

By around six months of age a baby's iron stores are beginning to run out and they need more iron than their dad. Solid foods are gradually introduced. These should include good sources of easily absorbed iron, such as purées of lean meat and liver\*, as well as vegetables and fruit.

*\* Limit liver intake for babies to 15g/week (no more than 3 teaspoons).*

# THOUSANDS OF NEW ZEALANDERS DON'T GET ENOUGH IRON.



## Are you one of them?



IRON FACT

IRON DEFICIENCY IS THE MOST COMMON NUTRITIONAL DISORDER IN THE WORLD.

WHY DO WE NEED IRON?

Iron is a mineral essential for good health and wellbeing. It can be found in some foods and has three main roles:

- **TO CARRY OXYGEN AROUND THE BODY** - every cell in the body needs oxygen. There is iron in the haemoglobin of red blood cells and it carries oxygen from your lungs to the rest of the body.
- **TO ENSURE A HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM** - the cells that fight infection depend on adequate stores of iron. This means if your iron stores are low, your body is more prone to infections.
- **FOR ENERGY** - iron is essential for the body's chemical reactions that produce energy from food. Therefore, if your iron levels are low, your body may not be able to use all the energy available.



**BEEF AND POTATO TOP BAKE**  
7.7mg iron/serve  
Visit [recipes.co.nz](http://recipes.co.nz)

PREGNANT WOMEN NEED 2 TO 3 TIMES MORE IRON THAN NORMAL.

IRON FACT

WHO NEEDS MOST IRON?

There are certain times when iron is particularly important. People who have higher iron needs include:

- Infants, children and teenagers because they are growing rapidly.
- Pregnant women for increased blood levels and to build baby's iron stores.
- Girls and women who have periods, due to regular monthly blood loss.
- Athletes and very active people.
- People on restricted or fad diets.

IRON FACT

MANY NEW ZEALAND BABIES, TODDLERS, TEENAGE GIRLS, PREGNANT WOMEN AND ATHLETES DON'T GET ENOUGH IRON.

COULD YOU BE SHORT OF IRON?

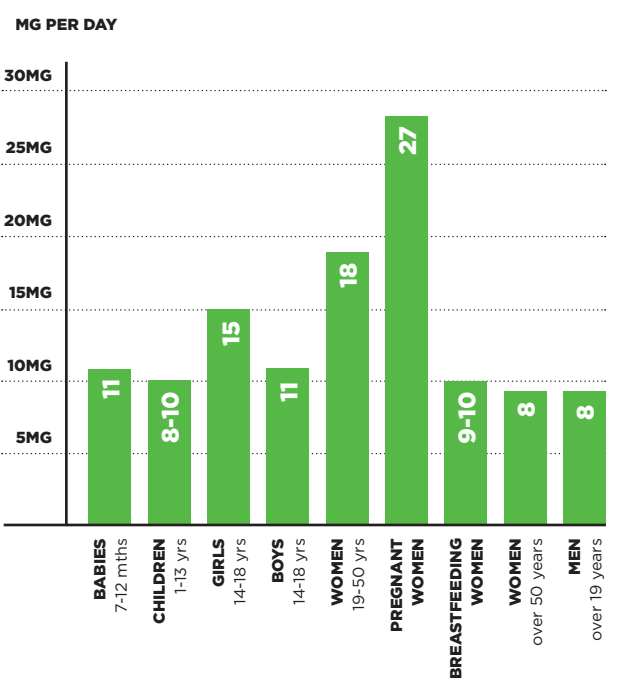
The symptoms of iron deficiency are commonly associated with a 'busy lifestyle' or 'a bug'. If you can tick any of the boxes you may be short of iron.

- ☐ Feel tired or lethargic
- ☐ Often irritable or grumpy
- ☐ Suffer frequent infections
- ☐ Feel the cold
- ☐ Tire easily
- ☐ Can't concentrate



**BARBECUED STEAKS WITH BABA GHANOUSH & TOMATO SALAD**  
4.7mg iron/serve  
Visit [recipes.co.nz](http://recipes.co.nz)

HOW MUCH IRON DO WE NEED EACH DAY?



The recommended dietary intake (RDI) for iron is based on an estimated 15-25% of dietary iron is absorbed. For example, a women aged 19-50 years with a RDI of 18mg needs to eat that much for it to provide at least 2.7mg of absorbable haem iron.

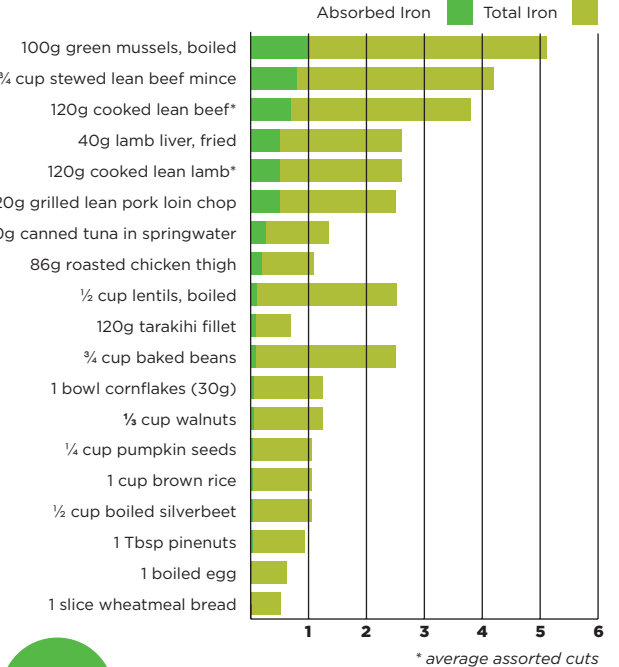
IRON: WHERE IS IT?

Iron is found in a number of foods, including red meat. In general, the redder the meat, the higher the iron content. Not all iron is the same: Iron is found in two forms, haem and non-haem.

**HAEM IRON FOODS:**  
Beef, lamb, liver, kidney, pork, poultry, seafood.

**NON-HAEM IRON FOODS:**  
Bread, breakfast cereals, beans and lentils, eggs, nuts, fruit and vegetables.

**The body absorbs haem iron more easily, with about a quarter being used. Only about 5% of non-haem iron is absorbed.**



IRON FACT

MANY WOMEN LEAD BUSY LIVES AND OFTEN FEEL TIRED, LETHARGIC AND RUN DOWN, WHICH ARE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF IRON DEFICIENCY.

HOW CAN I ABSORB MORE IRON?

Red meat can help to increase iron absorption, boosting the use of non-haem iron by up to four times. Vitamin C has a similar effect. Eating a combination of foods high in both haem and non-haem iron will ensure an iron-rich diet, for example a beef and vegetable stir-fry.

Not all iron is equal, for example, eating just 120g of lean beef steak provides the same amount of iron as over 1kg of silverbeet - that's 11 times more iron in beef than silverbeet.

120g of beef or over 1kg of silverbeet provides a quarter of a woman's daily iron needs.

**YOUR BODY CAN USE ABOUT 25% OF THE IRON IN RED MEAT, BUT ONLY ABOUT 5% OF THE IRON IN SILVERBEET.**



BEEF + LAMB

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Health problems may result from an inadequate diet (including iron deficiency). They may also have a medical basis unrelated to diet. The information in this brochure is only general and is not to be taken as a substitute for medical advice in relation to specific symptoms or health concerns.

March 2015