



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.

beef + lamb new zealand inc.

address ground floor, air new zealand building, smales farm park, cnr taharoto and northcote roads, takapuna, north shore city 0622, auckland
po box 33 648, takapuna, north shore city 0740, auckland

phone 09 489 7119 facsimile 09 489 7164 freephone 0800 733 466 email enquiries@beeflambnz.co.nz website www.beeflambnz.co.nz



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5. KEEP YOUR MEALS TANNIN FREE

It is better to drink tea and coffee between meals, rather than with your meals. The tannin in tea, and to lesser extent coffee, reduces the amount of iron we can use 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.

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 main food groups: breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, dairy products and of course some red meat, fish, chicken or a protein alternative (eg 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 nursing 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. You'll find recipe cards in supermarkets and butchers' shops, or visit our website: www.recipes.co.nz

For more information about iron, and for beef and lamb recipes, contact:

**Beef and Lamb New Zealand
PO Box 33648
Takapuna
Auckland**

Freephone: 0800 733 466 or visit www.beeflambnz.co.nz