

Iron Fact Sheet

As an essential mineral, iron is important for oxygen transportation to body tissues, normal production of various cells and hormones as well as healthy brain development and growth in children¹. **Symptoms of Iron-deficiency anemia include dizziness, poor appetite and weakened immune system².**

Did you know?

48.2% of pregnant women in urban areas of China had iron deficiency³!!!
~50% of preschool children (6 – 48 months) in Hong Kong had daily iron intake below recommendation^{4,5}!!!

How much iron do we need? The Chinese Dietary Reference Intake (2013)⁵

Life stages	Iron (mg/day)
0 – 6 months	0.3 ⁺
7 – 12 months	10 [*]
1 – 3 years	9 [*]
4 – 6 years	10 [*]
7 – 10 years	13 [*]
11 – 13 years	15 [*] (male); 18 [*] (female)
14 – 17 years	16 [*] (male); 18 [*] (female)
18 – 49 years	12 [*] (male); 20 [*] (female)
50 – 80 years	12 [*]
Pregnant women, 18 – 49 years, 1 st trimester	20 [*]
Pregnant women, 18 – 49 years, 2 nd trimester	24 [*]
Pregnant women, 18 – 49 years, 3 rd trimester	29 [*]
Lactating women, 18 – 49 years	24 [*]

+ = Adequate Intake (AI); * = Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI)

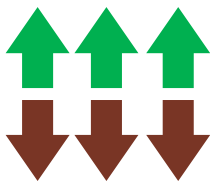


Dietary iron exists in two forms – heme iron, the better absorbed form, can only be found in animal sources and non-heme iron which can be found in plant foods, animal foods and fortified foods^{1,2}.

Examples of iron food sources²

Food source	Quantity	Iron content (mg)
Cooked clams	100 g	27.9
Cooked oysters	100 g	9.2
Cooked soybeans	1 cup (172 g)	8.8
Cooked spinach	1 cup (180 g)	6.4
Cooked beef (round)	100 g (~ 3 taels)	2.6
Cooked oats	1 cup (234 g)	2.1

Tips to enhance iron absorption^{1,2,6}



Vitamin C enhances the absorption of non-heme iron.

- Try to pair iron-rich foods with vitamin C sources such as kiwi fruits, tomato and broccoli,
- Tea and coffee contain polyphenols and phytates which hinder iron absorption.
- Consume between meals instead of during mealtime.

References: 1. Harvard T.H. Chan School of

Public Health. The nutrition source: Iron. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/iron/#:~:text=Food%20sources,formulas%20are%20fortified%20with%20iron>. Accessed on 17Jun2020. 2. Department of Health. Get to know iron deficiency anaemia. 2019.

3. He G et al. Zhonghua Fu Chan Ke Za Zhi. 2017;53(11):761-767. 4. Department of Health. A survey of infant and young child feeding in Hong Kong: diet and nutrient intake. 2012. 5. Chinese Nutrition Society. Chinese dietary reference intakes. 2013. 6. Zijl I et al. Crit Rev Food

Healthcare Corner

Supplementary Reading – WNSC HK Bulletin:

All about Iron



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