

## Getting enough iron.

At different times in our lives, we have different iron needs.

- Adult men need 6-8 mg/ day
- Adult women need
  - » 8-18 mg/ day while they are having menstrual periods
  - » 5-8 mg/ day after menopause
- During cancer and cancer treatment, iron needs may increase

These foods are good sources of iron. Try and include one in every meal or snack to boost iron stores.

Animal sources	
Food	Iron (mg)
100 g lamb	3.1
100 g cooked beef or kangaroo	2.7
100 g sardines	2
1 tablespoon chicken liver pate	1.6
100 g grilled salmon	1.2
1 egg	1
90g can tuna	0.8
100 g cooked chicken	0.5

Plant sources	
Food	Iron (mg)
2 Weetbix	3
1 cup wholemeal pasta	2.8
½ cup cooked spinach	2.6
100 g firm tofu	2.5
½ cup kidney beans	2
½ cup cooked lentils	2
½ cup cooked Asian greens (bok choy, choy sum, etc.)	1.8
1 tablespoon pumpkin seeds	1.2
1 row (25 g) dark chocolate	1.1
20 almonds	1
1 cup raw spinach/silverbeet	0.8



Our bodies are better at absorbing iron from animal sources than plant sources. So while a plant-based food and an animal-based food might have the same amount of iron in them, we can get more iron out of the animal-based food, and into our bodies.

## To increase iron absorption from food

- ✓ Eat high iron foods with a good source of vitamin C e.g. berries, citrus, capsicum, kiwi fruit, tomato.
- ✓ Eat high iron foods with a little meat. Even a small amount of meat can increase the amount of iron absorbed from all the foods in a meal (plant and animal iron sources).
- ✓ Avoid drinking tea, coffee or wine at the same time as eating these foods. They contain tannins which block iron absorption.



## Iron supplements

Iron supplements are an effective way to increase iron and may be necessary for people with low iron or anaemia. Iron supplements can cause constipation. Try these tips to manage it:

- **Fibre:** eat more fibre-rich foods e.g. wholegrains and cereals, fruit and vegetables
- **Water:** drink plenty of fluids (mostly water) ESPECIALLY if increasing fibre in the diet. Increasing fibre without increasing fluids can make constipation worse
- **Exercise:** gentle exercise and movement can help get the gut moving
- **Change tablets:** people find different tablets affect them differently. Speak to your pharmacist, but ensure that the dose is high enough. Some iron supplements are marketed as “gentle” but actually just contain less iron.