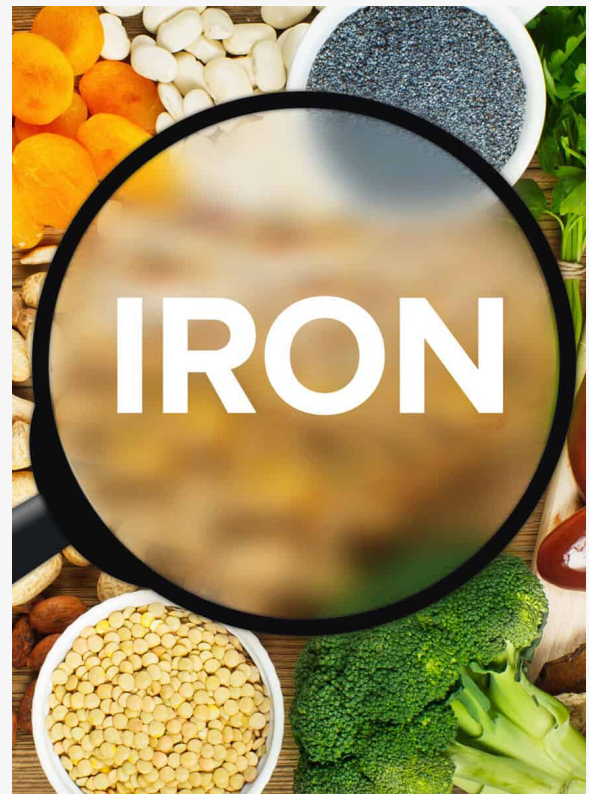


IRON

and how to fight deficiency

Iron is an important mineral that is involved in various bodily functions, including the transport of oxygen in the blood. Our red blood cells contain haemoglobin, this complex protein carries oxygen from our lungs to the rest of the body and is partly made from iron. It accounts for about two thirds of the body's iron. This is essential for providing energy for daily life. Myoglobin also contains iron and helps store oxygen in our muscle cells and is responsible for the red colour of muscle. Ensuring our bodies have sufficient iron provides proper functioning of the immune system which will help us fight infection.



The average person needs to absorb a small amount of iron each day to stay healthy. However our bodies absorb only a fraction of the iron contained in the foods we eat. The healthy body absorbs around 18 per cent of the available iron from a typical western diet which includes animal foods and about ten per cent from a vegetarian diet. The two types of Iron found in our diet are Haem iron and non-haem iron. Haem iron is found in animal tissue such as beef, lamb, kangaroo, chicken and fish and non-haem iron is found in animal-based products and plant foods such as dried beans and lentils.



Food and drinks that boost iron absorption include vitamin C, which is found in fruits and vegetables and cooking plant sources of iron. For example, the body absorbs 30 per cent of iron from cooked broccoli, compared to six per cent from raw broccoli. Other foods include:

- Shellfish
- Spinach
- Red meats, liver and other organ meats
- Legumes
- Pumpkin Seeds
- Quinoa
- Turkey
- Tofu
- Dark Chocolate
- Fish

Food and drinks that reduce your bodies ability to absorb iron include; soy proteins, tea, coffee and wine. Wine contain tannins and reduces iron absorption, by binding to the iron and carrying it out of the body.

In addition, inadequate vitamin A levels in your diet can lead to iron deficiency. Vitamin A helps to release stored iron and Calcium reduces the absorption of plant-sourced (non-haem) iron.



In Australia, one in eight people aged two years and over do not consume enough iron on average, which leads to being iron deficient.

You are at higher risk of being iron deficient if you fall into the following categories:

- Babies given cow's or other milk instead of breastmilk or infant formula
- Toddlers, particularly if they drink too much cow's milk
- Teenage girls and menstruating women , especially those who have heavy periods.
- Women using an IUD (because they generally have heavier periods)
- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women
- People with poor diet and or eating disorders.
- People who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet.
- Athletes in training.
- People with intestinal worms.
- Regular blood donors.
- People with chronic diseases such as cancer, auto-immune diseases, heart failure or renal (kidney) disease.
- People taking aspirin as a regular medication.