



Iron Rich Diet

You have been referred for surgery in the next few months. To prepare you for your surgery, there are many ways to boost your iron intake. You can boost your iron intake through your diet, taking iron supplements, or intravenous (IV) iron.

Iron, is part of your hemoglobin. Hemoglobin sends oxygen to your body’s tissues and organs to help keep them healthy.

Iron Rich Foods		
Meat and Alternatives	Juices, Vegetables , Fruit	Breads/Cereals./Grains
beef / pork / veal / ham / lamb	green leafy vegetables – e.g. spinach, kale	Cream of Wheat® / oatmeal
liver - chicken/beef	broccoli	granola
chicken	brussel sprouts	tofu (firm)
turkey	beets	enriched dry cereal
fish-haddock or salmon	potatoes with skin	bran muffin/date square
tuna (light)	tomato juice	English muffin
sardines	dried fruit - apricots, prunes, raisins, dates	naan bread
shrimp	prune juice	whole wheat/whole grain bread
oysters, raw	chick peas, miso	brown rice
eggs	blueberries	pasta, enriched - cooked
	strawberries	
OTHER SOURCES of Iron Rich Foods		
beans-kidney, navy, lima	seeds – pumpkin/sesame/sunflower	brewer’s yeast
baked beans	nuts – almonds, cashews. pistachios (dried)	molasses, black strap
lentils		wheat germ

Iron Supplements

Your health care team may recommend you take an oral iron supplement prior to your surgery.

Iron supplements are available in capsule, tablet and liquid form. These iron supplements are considered “over the counter” as you do not need a prescription.

NOTE: If you are on other medications, tell the pharmacist who will advise the best way to take the iron supplement.



What can I do to help my diet be more iron rich?

- Certain foods may decrease or interfere with the absorption of the iron supplement such as tea (especially black tea), coffee, and cocoa. **DO NOT** take these foods within one hour of taking your iron.
- Calcium rich foods (milk/yogurt/cheese and/or calcium supplements) may prevent the absorption of iron as well. Eat these foods between meals or as snacks during the day.
- Foods rich in Vitamin C help increase absorption of iron.
- Good sources of Vitamin C rich foods include: citrus fruits and juices, strawberries, melons, tomatoes, and vegetables like peppers, and broccoli.
- Iron sources from animals (meat) are the easiest to absorb.
- Cooking meals in cast iron pans allows iron from the pan to be absorbed by the food.

What do I need to know about Iron Supplements?

- Some medications may not work as well when taken with iron (e.g. antibiotics, thyroid or acid suppressant medications). Speak with your pharmacist for advice on the best way to take your supplement.
- Your bowel movements may turn dark in color while taking oral iron supplements. This is normal.
- Constipation and cramping may occur after taking oral iron supplements. Increasing fiber and roughage in your diet may help with this problem.
- If you have no diet or medical restrictions, take iron supplements with orange juice or a vitamin C tablet as it helps you absorb iron better.