

MAIN FUNCTIONS

- Helps make healthy red blood cells that transport oxygen throughout the body
- Critical for normal immune function
- Structural component of hundreds of essential molecules
- Assists antioxidant enzymes

GOOD SOURCES

There are two forms of dietary iron: heme iron and nonheme iron.

Heme Iron

red meat • poultry • fish

- Red Meat, 3 ounces, 2.3 mg



Nonheme Iron

lentils • vegetables • fortified food

- Lentils (cooked), ½ cup, 3.3 mg



mg = milligrams; a 3-ounce serving of meat or fish is about the size of a deck of cards

DAILY RECOMMENDATION

8
mg

Men
19+ Years

18
mg

Women
19–50 Years

8
mg

Women
51+ Years

SPECIAL NOTES

- Heme iron is better absorbed than nonheme iron; the absorption of nonheme iron is enhanced by vitamin C.
- National dietary surveys indicate that iron is underconsumed by adolescent and premenopausal females.
- The Daily Recommendation for iron is significantly increased during pregnancy (from 18 to 27 mg/day), yet the average dietary intake among pregnant women in the US is 15 mg/day.
- Iron is efficiently recycled by the body. Premenopausal women have higher requirements due to menstrual losses.
- Men and postmenopausal women should avoid dietary supplements containing iron.