Iron

**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

**Daily Recommendation**

- Men 19+ Years: 8 mg
- Women 19–50 Years: 18 mg
- Women 51+ Years: 8 mg

**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.