

# Patient Information: Iron

## Foods high in iron

- Liver and other meats
- Seafood
- Dried fruits like apricots, prunes and raisins
- Nuts
- Beans, especially lima beans
- Green leafy vegetables, such as spinach and broccoli
- Blackstrap molasses
- Whole grains
- Iron-fortified breads and cereals (check the label)

## How can I increase the iron in my diet?

Your body best absorbs the iron in meats. Eating a small amount of meat along with other sources of iron, such as certain vegetables, can help you get even more iron out of these foods. Taking vitamin C pills or eating foods high in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits or juice, at the same time you eat iron-rich foods or take your iron pill can help your body absorb the iron better.

Some foods block the absorption of iron. These include coffee, tea, egg yolks, milk, fiber and soy protein. Try to avoid these when you're eating food high in iron.

## Can iron pills cause problems?

Iron pills can cause stomach upset, heartburn and constipation. Be sure to tell your doctor about any discomfort you notice. The tips in the box below may help reduce this discomfort.

### Tips on taking iron pills

- Take the pills with food.
- Start slowly. Try taking 1 pill a day for 3 to 5 days, then 2 pills a day if you aren't bothered by that amount. Increase the number of pills until you reach the amount your doctor recommended.
- Increase the fiber in your diet if you have constipation. This is even though fiber may get in the way of how well your body can absorb iron. You'll still be able to absorb some iron, and it's better than not taking iron if you need it.
- Don't take iron pills at bedtime if they upset your stomach.
- If one type of iron pill causes problems, talk to your doctor about trying a different formula or brand.