

Are you ready to donate?

Before you donate blood, we must check your hemoglobin count. Hemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout your body.

Having too few red cells can be a sign of certain conditions, including iron-deficiency anemia.

To be eligible, men require a hemoglobin level of 13.0 g/dL to 20.0 g/dL, and women require a hemoglobin level of 12.5 g/dL to 20.0 g/dL.

Why hemoglobin is important

Low hemoglobin is the number one cause of donor deferral. Luckily, it can often be corrected with a proper diet. Eating iron-rich foods is the best way to improve your hemoglobin levels. Two simple tips will allow you to maximize your iron absorption:

1. Eat foods rich in Vitamin C to help certain iron-rich foods more easily be absorbed into your system.
2. During meals, avoid foods that contain phytates and polyphenols. These are substances found in plants that inhibit proper absorption of iron.

Iron is an essential mineral required in your diet. You need iron to make new red blood cells, which help to replace the ones lost in a blood donation.



Blood donors give selflessly to care for others. Giving blood depletes your iron stores and, over time, may cause anemia. Don't forget to care for yourself! Create a new habit by regularly increasing your dietary iron. If you have any questions, please contact us.



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Donor Centers in

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IRON: What Blood Donors Need to Know



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Iron Supplementation

Taking an iron supplement can be a great way to increase your body's iron. We suggest that you discuss this with your health care provider.

- Iron is best absorbed on an empty stomach.
- Vitamin C may increase absorption.
- Avoid milk, calcium, and antacids for at least two hours before or after taking your iron supplement.
- Do not take your supplement with foods that contain phytates or polyphenols.

Iron supplementation can cause side effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, stomach pain, and dark-colored stools.



Food and Drinks to Avoid Before and After Donating

Polyphenols and phytates are two compounds that inhibit iron absorption. While both have many health benefits, they can substantially reduce the amount of iron you absorb from your diet. These compounds should be avoided for two hours before and after meals.

Polyphenols

Coffee	Blackberries
Tea	Blueberries
Swedish Cocoa	Oregano
Red Wine	Chamomile

Phytates

Walnuts	Whole Grains
Sesame Seeds	Lentils
Dried Beans	Peas
Cereals	Almonds

Iron and You

A typical blood donation is equivalent to approximately 500 milliliters of blood. A healthy donor loses about 200 to 250 mg of iron per donation. Iron stores can take from 3 to 15 weeks to replace with a proper diet. Insufficient recovery of iron in the diet can lead to iron-deficiency anemia, with symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and lightheadedness.

Recommended Daily Iron Consumption

Age	Male	Female
14-18 years	11 mg	15 mg
19-50 years	8 mg	18 mg
51+ years	8 mg	8 mg

Only 10 to 30 percent of consumed iron is absorbed and used by the body. Therefore, it is vital to maximize absorption potential by adding Vitamin C and decreasing absorption inhibitors such as phytates and polyphenols.

Iron and Your Diet

Iron can be obtained in the diet through two ideal sources – heme iron and non-heme iron. Your body absorbs the most iron from heme sources, which are foods that originally contained hemoglobin (red meat, poultry, fish). Heme-iron is an excellent source of iron that is easy for your body to absorb. Non-heme iron, derived from plants, is still a good source of iron but may not be as readily available to your body.



Excellent Sources of Iron (Heme-Iron)

Lean Beef	Pork	Lamb
Red Meat	Chicken	Fish
Poultry	Turkey	Shellfish
Mussels	Oysters	Liver

Good Sources of Iron (Non-Heme Iron)

Tofu	Tomatoes	Olives
Spinach	Beans	Lentils
Sweet Peas	Nuts	Potatoes
Kale	Beets	Broccoli
Dried Fruit	Leafy Dark Greens	
Dark Chocolate	Black Strap Molasses	
Fortified Grains	Brussels Sprouts	

Sources of Vitamin C

Grapefruit	Pineapple	Mangoes
Kiwi	Tomatoes	Peppers
Melons	Citrus Juices	Tangerines
Cabbage	Strawberries	Broccoli