

IRON:

HOW TO BOOST YOUR INTAKE

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LIMIT FATIGUE

Iron, a mineral that is an important part of red blood cells, helps transport oxygen from the lungs to exercising muscles. An iron-poor diet can easily cause anemia and create unusually fatigued muscles during exercise.

Many athletes consume less than the daily recommended iron intake:

- 8 milligrams (mg) for males
- 18 mg for females*

****Females require more iron because they lose it during menstrual bleeding.***

Red meat is among the best food sources of iron. Athletes who do not eat red meat have a higher risk of becoming anemic. The iron in meat (and other animal proteins) gets absorbed twice as efficiently as the iron in vegetables. For example, spinach is a relatively iron-rich food, but only 3% of its iron is absorbable, unless spinach is eaten with some chicken, meat or other form of animal protein. Similarly, adding lean hamburger to chili boosts absorption of the iron in beans.

Look for enriched or fortified, on food labels for bread, cereal, rice and pasta. That means those grain-foods have iron added to them.

At meals, include fruit and/or vegetables rich in Vitamin C to enhance iron absorption. For example, by enjoying strawberries on breakfast cereal, sliced tomato in a sandwich, and broccoli with dinner.

- Fruits rich in vitamin C include:
 - Berries
 - Oranges
 - Grapefruit
 - Cantaloupe
 - Watermelon
- Vegetables rich in vitamin C include:
 - Broccoli
 - Spinach
 - Peppers
 - Tomatoes
 - Potato

If available, cook in cast iron skillets. Cast iron offers more nutritional value than does stainless steel cookware!

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A multi-vitamin-mineral pill with iron can be a wise choice if you do not eat lean red meats or iron-enriched breakfast cereal, and you do not use cast iron cookware. The supplement may help protect you from becoming anemic.

Serious athletes routinely get blood tests for hemoglobin, hematocrit, and ferritin to monitor iron status, prevent anemia, and needless drops in athletic performance.

Animal sources (best absorbed)

Iron (mg)

Beef, 4 ounces roasted	3
Turkey, 4 ounces roasted dark meat	2
Tuna, 5-ounce can, light	2
Pork, 4 ounces roasted	1
Chicken breast, 4 ounces roasted	1
Egg, 1 large	1

Fruit

Raisins, 1/3 cup

Iron (mg)

1

Vegetables

Spinach, 1/2 cup cooked

Green Peas, 1/2 cup cooked

Broccoli, 1/2 cup cooked

Iron (mg)

3

1

1

Grains

Cereal, Total 100% fortified, 1 cup

Whole Grain Wheat Cereal, 3/4 cup

Toasted Oat Cereal, 1 cup

Raisin Bran, 1 cup

Spaghetti, 1 cup cooked, enriched

Bread, 1 slice enriched

Iron (mg)

18

9

8

8

2

1

Beans and Legumes

Kidney beans, 1 cup canned

Baked beans, 1 cup

Tofu, 1/4 cake

Iron (mg)

3

3

2

