



Iron in Foods

There are 2 types of iron found in foods:

- Heme
- Non-heme

Your body absorbs heme iron more easily than non-heme iron. However, foods containing non-heme iron are also very important sources of iron in your diet.

See [HealthLinkBC File #68c Iron and Your Health](#) for more information on how much iron you need and how to get the most iron from foods.

What foods have heme iron?

Food	Serving	Iron (mg)
Pork liver*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	13.4
Chicken liver*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	9.2
Oysters**	75 g (2 ½ oz)	6.3
Mussels	75 g (2 ½ oz)	5.0
Beef liver*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	4.8
Liver pate (canned)*	75 g (2 ½ oz)	4.1
Beef	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.4
Clams	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.1
Sardines	75 g (2 ½ oz)	2.0
Lamb	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.5
Tuna/herring/trout/ mackerel	75 g (2 ½ oz)	1.2
Chicken	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.9
Pork	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.9
Shrimp	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.9
Salmon	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.5
Turkey	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.5
Flounder/ sole/plaice	75 g (2 ½ oz)	0.2

g = gram, mg = milligram, oz = ounce

*Liver and liver products (e.g. liverwurst spread and liver sausages) are high in vitamin A. Too much vitamin A may cause birth defects, especially during the first trimester. The safest choice is to limit these foods during pregnancy. If you choose to eat liver or liver products, have no more than 75g (2 ½ ounces) per week.

**Pacific oysters tend to be higher in cadmium. Health Canada recommends that adults eat no more than 12 oysters per month and that children eat no more than 1 to 2 oysters per month.

What foods have non-heme iron?

Food	Serving	Iron (mg)
Infant cereal (dry)***	28 g (5 tbsp)	7.0
Dried soybeans (boiled)	175 mL (¾ cup)	6.5
Lentils (cooked)	175 mL (¾ cup)	4.9
Pumpkin seeds/kernels (roasted)	60 mL (¼ cup)	4.7
Enriched cold cereal***	30 g	4.5
Dark red kidney beans (boiled)	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.9
Blackstrap molasses	15 mL (1 tbsp)	3.6
Quaker® instant enriched oatmeal***	1 package	3.5
Spinach (cooked)	125 mL (½ cup)	3.4
Instant cream of wheat (prepared)***	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.1
Refried beans	175 mL (¾ cup)	2.7

Edamame, green soybeans (cooked and shelled)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	2.4
Medium firm or firm tofu	150 g (3/4 cup)	2.4
Tahini (sesame seed butter)	30 mL (2 tbsp)	2.3
Chickpeas (canned)	175 mL (3/4 cup)	2.2
Lima beans (boiled)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	2.2
Swiss chard (cooked)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	2.1
Bagel	45 g (1/2)	1.9
Seaweed, agar (dried)	8 g (1/2 cup)	1.7
Prune juice (canned)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.6
Regular cream of wheat (prepared)	175 mL (3/4 cup)	1.6
Beet greens (cooked)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.5
Eggs	2	1.4
Green peas (boiled)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.3
Quick or large flake oats (prepared)	175 mL (3/4 cup)	1.3
Hummus	175 mL (3/4 cup)	1.2
Sunflower seeds/ kernels (roasted)	60 mL (1/4 cup)	1.2
Tomato sauce (canned)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.2
Pearled barley (cooked)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.1

Potato (baked with skin)	1 medium	1.1
Quinoa (cooked)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.1
Sauerkraut	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.1
Enriched pasta (cooked)	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.0
Fancy molasses	15 mL (1 tbsp)	1.0
Shredded wheat***	30 g	1.0
Soy beverage	250 mL (1 cup)	1.0
Spinach (raw)	250 mL (1 cup)	0.9
Whole wheat bread	35 g (1 slice)	0.9

g = gram, mg = milligram, mL = milliliter, tbsp = tablespoon

***Iron amounts in some enriched and prepared foods vary; check the label for more information. If the iron amount is given as a percentage of the daily value (DV), the standard used is 14 mg (or 7 mg for infant cereals). For example, if a serving of cereal has 25% of the daily value, it has 3.5 mg of iron (0.25 x 14 mg).

Note: Most of the iron values in the above tables come from the Canadian Nutrient File (CNF, 2015). If more than one entry for that food item was available in the CNF, an average of the entries was taken.

For More Information

For more nutrition information, call **8-1-1** to speak with a registered dietitian.