



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	Iron (mg) per 75g (2 ½ oz serving)
Pork liver*	13.4
Chicken liver*	9.2
Oysters**	6.3
Mussels	5.0
Beef liver*	4.8
Liver pate, canned*	4.1
Beef	2.4
Clams	2.1
Sardines, canned	2.0
Lamb	1.5
Tuna/herring/trout/mackerel	1.2
Chicken	0.9
Pork	0.9
Shrimp	0.9
Salmon	0.5
Turkey	0.5
Flounder/sole/plaice	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 B.C. oysters per month and that children eat no more than 1.5 B.C. 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, cooked	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.9
Blackstrap molasses	15 mL (1 tbsp)	3.6
Instant enriched hot cereal***	175 mL (¾ cup)	3.4
Spinach, cooked	125 mL (½ cup)	3.4
Refried beans, canned	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	1/2 bagel	1.9
Potato, baked with skin	1 medium	1.9
Seaweed, agar (dried)	8 g (1/2 cup)	1.7
Prune puree	60 mL (1/4 cup)	1.7
Beet greens, cooked	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.5
Quinoa, 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	60 mL (1/4 cup)	1.2
Sunflower seeds/ kernels, dry 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

Sauerkraut	125 mL (1/2 cup)	1.1
Fortified soy beverage	250 mL (1 cup)	1.1
Fancy molasses	15 mL (1 tbsp)	1.0
Shredded wheat***	30 g	1.0
Spinach, raw	250 mL (1 cup)	0.9
Whole wheat bread	35 g (1 slice)	0.9
Whole wheat pasta, cooked	125 mL (1/2 cup)	0.8
Beets, sliced, boiled	125 mL (1/2 cup)	0.7

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

***Iron amounts in enriched and prepared foods vary. Check the nutrition label for more information. By 2022, all labels will list the amount of iron in milligrams. Until then, some labels will only list the iron as a percent daily value (%DV). The daily value 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). 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.