

# IRON

## for Strong, Healthy Blood

### What is Iron and Why Do You Need It?

Iron is an essential mineral that is needed for healthy blood. You get iron from the foods you eat. It helps your blood carry oxygen throughout your body. If you don't eat enough iron-rich foods, your blood could become low in iron. This is called "iron deficiency anemia" or simply "anemia."

Symptoms of anemia include:

- Feeling tired, weak, or grouchy
- Getting sick often
- Trouble learning or working
- Pale skin

### Eat Plenty of Iron-Rich Foods

Choose these foods that are high in iron to make sure you have strong, healthy blood:

#### Meats

- Beef
- Chicken
- Shrimp\*
- Clams
- (legs and thighs)
- Lamb
- Turkey
- Fish\*
- Pork

#### Non-Meat Foods

- Enriched cereals with added iron
- Beans
- Dried peas and lentils
- Hummus
- Dried fruits like raisins, prunes, apricots, figs
- Tofu
- Egg yolks
- Whole grain or enriched cereal, bread, pasta, tortillas, rice, cooked cereal
- Dark green vegetables like collards, spinach, chard, kale, broccoli

\*Pregnant women should limit cooked fish and seafood consumption to no more than 12 ounces per week. Canned white tuna should be limited to less than 6 ounces per week.

### Absorb More Iron

Try incorporating these ideas at meals and snacks to help your body absorb as much iron possible.

• Eat foods rich in vitamin C with foods rich in iron at the same meal. Vitamin C helps your body use more of the iron in the food you eat. Foods rich in vitamin C include:

- Oranges
- Watermelon
- 100% fruit juice with vitamin C
- Strawberries
- Kiwi fruit
- Bell peppers
- Cantaloupe
- Mango
- Cabbage
- Tomatoes
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower

- Eat a little meat with meals. A little meat helps your body absorb more iron. Try chili, spaghetti with meat sauce, or beef stew.

- Drink coffee and tea in between meals, not with meals. They can keep your body from absorbing iron when consumed together.

- Cook in cast iron pots and skillets, which will increase the iron in foods.

- Avoid eating ice, popsicles, or slushies. These can cause low iron.