



All about Iron

Iron is an important mineral necessary for the survival of the human body. Anaemia, due to iron deficiency, is one of the two leading causes of illness worldwide.

Functions: the main functions of iron are to transport oxygen within the body and to convert blood sugar into energy. Iron is also part of many enzymes involved in the body's biochemistry.

Iron plays an integral role in energy production; breakdown of fatty acids; immune system; liver detoxification; building collagen and elastin (preventing wrinkles and keeping bones and tissue strong); and brain function.

Deficiency symptoms: fatigue, heart palpitations, increased susceptibility to infections, hair loss, weakness, skin pallor, headache, 'spooning' of fingernails, brittle nails and laboured breathing after exertion.

Causes or iron deficiency:

- Inadequate intake from dietary sources
- Reduced storage of iron in the body
- Problems with release of iron from storage, even where stores are sufficient
- Low stomach acidity (common among the elderly or those using antacids)
- Excess consumption of tea and coffee
- Disturbed bowel function, such as Crohn's disease, due to poor absorption of nutrients
- Excessive blood loss due to menstruation, injury, surgery, ulcers, worm infestations
- Blood donations
- Excessive energy use through athletic activity

Tests: a blood serum analysis provides a complete picture by determining iron levels in the blood, storage and transfer capacity. **Haemaview™ Live Blood Analysis** reveals parameters which indicate low iron levels but these are always confirmed and correlated with a blood test through your GP.

Not all iron is made equal. There are different sources of iron – dietary sources are of either animal or plant origin. Supplements should be of the simplest form to avoid side effects such as constipation and improper storage within the body. Preferred forms are Iron Phosphate or chelated iron. Forms to avoid are Ferrous sulphate, Ferrous oxide, Ferrous gluconate.

Interactions – some nutrients help and others stop absorption of iron.

- ☺ Vitamin C enhances iron absorption.
- ☺ Eating meat, fish or poultry with vegetable sources or iron assist in absorption of all forms of iron
- ☹ Phytates – found in whole grain cereals and legumes – reduce absorption of iron (high fibre)



- ⊗ Tannins in tea and coffee bind iron and reduce its absorption while also placing additional stress on the kidneys
- ⊗ Zinc and copper share the same absorption pathway as iron and any supplements should be taken separately and away from other meals
- ⊗ Calcium and Vitamin E (high dose supplements) can also inhibit iron absorption and should be taken away from iron-containing meals

Iron Toxicity can occur from over consumption or from genetic disorder.

Dagmar Ganser is a qualified naturopath and is able to advise you on all your nutritional needs. Self prescribing of any nutrient may have adverse effects so **always seek professional guidance.**

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