



# Holistic Medical Centre

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## How do I keep my iron levels up?

Iron is a mineral that is required in the bone marrow for the formation of a protein called haemoglobin. Haemoglobin (with the iron) is then able to form red blood cells which carry oxygen from the lungs to the tissues of the body. It is specifically the iron molecule that binds to the oxygen molecule and allows it to be carried around the body. Iron deficiency is defined as lower than optimum levels of iron and iron stores in the body (iron is stored in the liver in the form of ferritin). Iron deficiency anaemia is a more dramatic form of iron deficiency where the iron has been low enough for long enough to create a deficiency in haemoglobin. The effects of iron deficiency anaemia are more pronounced. Haemoglobin gives blood its bright red colour which is why iron deficiency anaemia causes the skin to appear pale. Many of the other symptoms are due to a lack of oxygen in the tissues. Other deficiency symptoms include: fatigue, breathlessness, dizziness restless legs and an increased susceptibility to infections. Iron deficiency in children has

been associated with cognitive, developmental and behavioral problems. The most common causes of iron deficiency are heavy bleeding, insufficient dietary intake of iron or problems with the absorption of iron. There are different forms of iron: meat contains a form of iron that is commonly known as haem iron. This is iron that is combined with a protein and is more easily absorbed than non-haem iron. Iron from vegetable sources is less well absorbed therefore greater quantities of this non-haem iron need to be consumed. Red meat is the source of haem iron and good sources of non-haem iron include: pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, molasses, almonds, cashew nuts, chickpeas and Brewers yeast. Below are some tips on how to increase your iron intake. It may sound strange but brewers yeast and small amounts of kelp powder sprinkled on popcorn is surprisingly delicious, please do give it a try. Try our chickpea salad or hummus with plain crackers or even better raw vegetables. A great snack for children and adults alike: lightly toast sunflower and pumpkin

seeds in a pan until lightly golden and drizzle a little Tamari (traditionally fermented soy sauce). Some recent studies have looked closely at digestive ecology and some very interesting discoveries have been made. Probiotics and prebiotics appear to be important promoters of mineral uptake. Prebiotics are non-digestible fibres in edible plants (e.g. inulin) and they are growth factors for probiotic bacteria. Together they appear to stimulate cell proliferation in the digestive tract which can improve the uptake of minerals such as iron, calcium and zinc. They also appear to increase the solubility of minerals which further enhances uptake. Phytic acid in plants has the reputation of binding to minerals such as calcium, iron and zinc and interfering with absorption. Probiotics appear to promote the degradation of phytic acid and promote the release of phytoestrogens from foods. Constipation has been associated with iron supplementation but this is mainly a problem with the iron sulphate form. Other forms such as iron biglycinate iron should not cause this problem but it is best to discuss with your health practitioner.

## Our favourite quote

Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal.  
Martin Luther King Jr

## Health tips

A smoothie to give you good amounts of iron along with good prebiotics. In a blender combine rice milk or coconut milk with frozen berries, a banana, a teaspoon of cashew nut butter, a dessertspoon of almond butter, a teaspoon (or more to taste) of molasses.

If you like herbal teas, nettle tea is a also a good source of iron and you can add finely cut nettle tea into lentil and vegetable soups for an extra boost of iron that does not change the taste of the soup.

If you do not have low iron please do not take iron supplements as excess iron is a pro-oxidant.

## Happy Patient File

A patient came to us with dramatic IBS with explosive diarrhoea and we began the treatment with prescribing the normal things to restore gut health such as probiotics but the dramatic improvement was experienced after prescribing a small amount of DHEA and the explosive diarrhoea promptly ceased. An unexpected outcome but a happy patient none the less.

## More information and recipes

### Chickpea salad

In a bowl combine cooked chickpeas, chopped fresh mint, chopped cucumber, chopped toasted almonds, small florets of broccoli and cauliflower. The sauce consists of a dressing of 1/3 cup of olive oil, salt & pepper to

taste, 1 tsp of honey or pomegranate molasses (best), 1 tablespoon of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar, 1/2 tsp of each marjoram and basil, 1/4 tsp of ground nutmeg (ideally fresh ground and 1 clove of fresh garlic. Serve warm or cold with fish, meat or other

protein of your choice.

### Article twenty two from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Article XXII

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through na-

tional effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.