



### Anemia And Iron Therapy

The major function of red blood cells is to carry oxygen from your lungs to the other parts of the body. Iron is one of the major building blocks of red blood cells, although other vitamins and minerals are needed too. Many women have little iron stored in their bodies because of diet and chronic menstrual blood loss.

Pregnancy often tips the balance - as baby takes and uses iron – coupled with limited intake, women can become anemic. Anemia, or low blood iron storage, during pregnancy is especially a concern because it can be **associated with low birth weight, premature birth, and maternal morbidity (needing blood transfusions)**. Taking in extra iron can improve this – with increasing dietary intake and often needed, supplemental iron – more so than what may already be in your prenatal vitamin.

There is a bewildering variety of iron preparations now on the market. In general, the cheapest most tolerable and effective is the one to choose. Prescription meds are no better than over the counter preparations. Depending on your level of anemia, your doctor may suggest to take the iron up to three times a day. Some examples:

- Ferrous Sulfate 300 mg (i.e., Feosol, Slow Fe)
- Ferrous Gluconate (i.e., Fergon 435 mg)
- Ferrous Fumarate (Feostat 100 mg)
- Bifera / Bifera RX / Prefera OB
- Ferralet 90 (Prescription Only)

To maximize effectiveness, try to take your iron separately from calcium, dairy and supplements such as turmeric. Vitamin C increases absorption so consider taking with some orange juice for example. If you take your iron, your bowel movements may turn black and sticky from the unabsorbed iron. Constipation is common. Try increased water, raw fruits and vegetables, or daily Colace (stool softener) and/or Metamucil.

Included here is a list of iron rich foods.

<u>Excellent sources of iron</u>	<u>Good sources of iron</u>	<u>Fair sources of iron</u>	
2 oz. of Calf Liver	1 Cup Berries	½ cup Apple Sauce	2 oz. Chicken
¼ cup Prune Juice	2 Dried Peach Halves	1 small Orange/OJ	3 spears Asparagus
2 oz. of Pork Liver	½ cup Dried Beans & Peas	1 slice White Bread	1 cup Carrots
2 oz. of Beef (Lean)	¾ cup Shredded Wheat	1 medium Peach	1 cup Cucumber
2 eggs	2 oz. Pork (lean)	1 small Pear	1 cup Green Bean
½ cup Dried Raisins	1 cup Turnip Greens	½ small Grapefruit	1 cup Cooked Onions
1 cup English Peas	2 Dried Prunes	2 medium Plums	4 Radishes
1 cup Lima Beans	2 oz. Turkey (darkmeat)	½ cup Fruit Cocktail	1 cup Rutabagas
1 cup Mustard Greens	1 cup Broccoli	½ cup Grapefruit Juice	
1 cup Spinach	1 cup Collards	½ cup Oatmeal	
	1 cup Cauliflower	½ cup Tomatoes	
	1 cup Brussels Sprouts	½ cup Sweet Potatoes	
	1 cup Winter Squash	½ cup Rice	

*Other good sources if you are vegetarian/vegan: lentils, tofu/tempeh, blackstrap molasses, beans, swiss chard. B12 deficiency can occur commonly in vegetarian women as well so make sure this is in your prenatal vitamins or you are taking it separately.*

If dietary iron and oral supplements are not enough, your doctor may ask you to do some additional blood tests to help figure out potential other causes of the anemia. IV iron is another option if you cannot tolerate oral iron or your anemia is not improving fast enough.