

Iron Supplementation

Why is Iron Important?

Iron is essential for **red blood cell production**, which carries oxygen throughout the body. Low iron levels can cause **fatigue, weakness, dizziness, shortness of breath, and anemia**.

Recommended Daily Iron Intake

Age & Group	Recommended Daily Intake (mg)
Children (4-8 years)	10 mg
Children (9-13 years)	8 mg
Teens (14-18 years)	Boys: 11 mg, Girls: 15 mg
Adults (19-50 years)	Men: 8 mg, Women: 18 mg
Pregnant Women	27 mg
Adults 51+ years	8 mg

Best Food Sources of Iron

Heme Iron (Best Absorbed - Animal Sources)

- ✓ Red meat (beef, lamb, liver) - 2-3 mg per serving
- ✓ Chicken & turkey - 1-2 mg per serving
- ✓ Seafood (oysters, clams, tuna) - 2-6 mg per serving

Non-Heme Iron (Plant-Based Sources, Needs Vitamin C for Better Absorption)

- ✓ Spinach, kale - 2-4 mg per cup
- ✓ Lentils, beans - 3-5 mg per cup
- ✓ Tofu - 3 mg per ½ cup
- ✓ Fortified cereals - 10-18 mg per serving
- ✓ Nuts & seeds (pumpkin seeds, cashews) - 1-2 mg per serving

Iron Supplements

Ferrous sulfate (325 mg) = 65 mg elemental iron (most common)
Ferrous gluconate (325 mg) = 35 mg elemental iron (gentler on the stomach)
Ferrous fumarate (325 mg) = 106 mg elemental iron (high potency)

How to Take Iron Supplements

- ✓ **Take on an empty stomach** for best absorption (1 hour before or 2 hours after meals).
- ✓ **Take with Vitamin C** (orange juice, citrus fruits) to improve absorption.
- ✓ **Avoid coffee, tea, dairy, or calcium supplements** within 2 hours of taking iron, as they block absorption.

Possible Side Effects & How to Manage Them

- ⚠ **Constipation** - Drink plenty of water, eat fiber-rich foods, and consider a stool softener if needed.
- ⚠ **Stomach upset** - Take with a small snack if needed but avoid dairy.
- ⚠ **Dark stools** - This is normal and harmless.
- ⚠ **Nausea** - Try a lower dose or slow-release iron supplement.

When to Seek Medical Help

Severe stomach pain or vomiting

Signs of iron overload (joint pain, fatigue, heart issues)

No improvement in anemia symptoms after 1-2 months of supplementation

Bottom Line

- ✓ **Get iron from food first**; supplement only if needed.
- ✓ **Take with Vitamin C and avoid calcium/dairy at the same time.**
- ✓ **Be patient-iron levels take weeks to improve.**
- ✓ **Manage side effects with water, fiber, and proper timing.**

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.