

Anemia and You

What is anemia?

Your recent blood test showed that you have anemia (uh-**nee**-me-uh). This means that your blood doesn't have enough red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen around the body and to your baby if you are pregnant. When you don't have enough of these cells, your body and your baby don't get as much oxygen as they should. Lots of pregnant women and women with very heavy periods get anemia.

What problems can anemia cause?

People with anemia can feel very tired, get out of breath, or look pale. They might also have headaches and a fast heartbeat. But some people with anemia feel fine, and do not have any symptoms.

Even if you feel fine your anemia needs to be treated. This is **especially** important for women who are pregnant. If it's not treated, your baby could be born too early and too small. If the anemia is very bad and you bleed a lot when you have the baby, you might need to get blood afterwards.

What do I need to do?

You need to eat more foods that have iron in them. Your body needs iron to make more red blood cells. Here are some foods that have iron in them:

Best sources of iron

Try to eat a small serving of any of these foods **a few times a week** until your health care provider tells you otherwise. These foods work fast to treat your anemia.

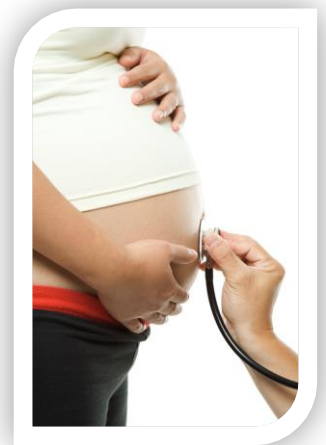
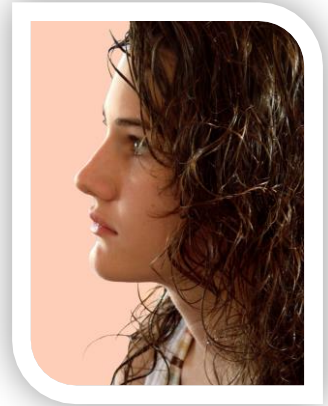
- Liver
- Liverwurst
- Cooked oysters (not raw!)
- Mussels
- Heart
- Kidneys

If you are pregnant, don't eat liver or liverwurst more than 1-2 times a **month** in your first three months of pregnancy.

Good sources of iron

Try to eat a small serving of any of these foods **at least once every day** until your health care provider tells you otherwise.

- Gizzards
- Deer (venison)
- Chicken or turkey **dark meat** (leg and thigh)
- Goat
- Beef
- Clams
- Shrimp



More on
back



Fair sources of iron

These foods will help, but not as much. Eating the foods in the other lists will help the most.

- Breakfast cereals that are iron fortified
- Chicken or turkey **white meat** (breast)
- Pork
- Tuna

What else should I know about iron?

- Your body can use the iron that is in meat the most easily.
- A few vegetables also contain iron. Ask your nutritionist for the best choices.
- You will be able to get the most iron from these vegetables if you eat them with a little meat or vitamin C. Vitamin C is in foods like oranges and other citrus fruits, kiwi, and green chile.
- If you cook your food in uncoated cast iron pans, you may get a little extra iron.

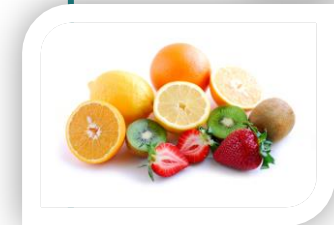
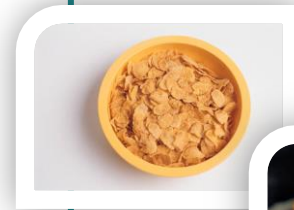
Should I take iron pills?

Your health care provider might also want you to take iron pills. If so, here are some things to know:

- Only take pills that say “**325 mg ferrous sulfate.**”
- ✗ Do not take the pills with your prenatal vitamins. Take them at another time.
- ✗ Do not take the pills all together. Spread them out during the day.
- Take the pills with water or a little bit of juice.
- ✗ Do not take the pills with milk, coffee, or tea. They will make it harder for your body to use the iron.
- Iron pills can bother some people. Let us know if you are having any problems. Or you can check the “You and Your Baby’s Health” book for ideas of what to do if you have any problems.
- **Iron pills are very dangerous for children.** Keep the closed bottle in a safe place where children or pets can’t get to it!

Remember, you will feel better in a couple of weeks after you start your iron treatment. If you are pregnant, you are also helping to keep your baby healthy.

Questions? Call us!



Keep iron pills away from children!