Iron Rich Diet

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ℹ️ For more information, please contact:

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Caring about what we do • Respecting and valuing each other

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Introduction

Iron is an essential mineral. It is needed to make red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body.

A lack of iron can lead to iron deficiency anaemia, which can cause:

- Tiredness
- Reduced ability to work and concentrate
- Breathlessness
- Increased risk of infections
- Feeling cold

To prevent anaemia, it is important to eat plenty of iron rich foods.
Which foods contain iron?

Iron is found in both animal and plant foods.

**Animal sources** called haem iron are found in meat and fish. Our bodies easily absorb this type of iron.

**Plant sources** are called non haem iron and are found in cereals, dried beans, peas, lentils and some fruit and vegetables. Our bodies absorb this type of iron better if taken with foods rich in vitamin C or with meat and fish (haem iron).
Iron rich foods

- Meat – liver* (liver pate, faggots), kidney, heart, tongue, red meat (beef, lamb, pork, ham as well as cheaper cuts like lean mince, corned beef).

  * Avoid liver and liver products if you are pregnant as they are high in vitamin A, which can be harmful to your baby.

- Eggs – aim for four to six a week.

- Fish – sardines, mackerel.

- Dark green leafy vegetables – especially spinach, broccoli, cabbage, curly kale, watercress.

- Pulses – beans, lentils, chickpeas, baked beans, soya beans.

- Dried fruit – prunes (and prune juice), raisins, sultanas, apricots, figs, dates.

- Bread and cereals – wholemeal bread and fortified breads and breakfast cereals (those with at least 8mg or iron per 100g).

- Miscellaneous – dark chocolate, nuts (particularly cashews), seeds (particularly sunflower seeds and sesame seeds), liquorice.
How can I help the iron I eat work better?

Vitamin C helps the absorption of iron. Try to include foods rich in vitamin C with your iron containing meal.

Good sources of vitamin C include fresh fruit (orange, grapefruit, strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants and kiwis) and fruit juice. Also, vitamin C enriched squashes, vegetables, tomatoes and new potatoes.

Drinking hot drinks such as tea, coffee and cocoa can restrict the iron your body absorbs from your food so try not to drink these at least an hour after you have eaten and between meals.
Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Mrs Heidi Seaward, Office Manager, Nutrition and Dietetic Department, Scarborough Hospital Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL, Tel: 01723 342415 or email heidi.seaward@york.nhs.uk

Teaching, Training and Research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.