

# How To Increase Your Iron Count



**American  
Red Cross**

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Thank you for volunteering to donate blood today. The iron-containing portion of the red blood cells responsible for carrying oxygen is hemoglobin. To be accepted as a blood donor your hemoglobin must be at least 12.5 g/dl. The percentage of your total blood volume that consist of oxygen-carrying red blood cells is your hematocrit. To be accepted as a whole blood donor, your hematocrit must be at least 38 percent.

Low hemoglobin or hematocrit — also called anemia — indicates a person does not have a sufficient volume of red blood cells. The most common cause of mild anemia in healthy people is a low level of iron, which is essential for the production of red blood cells. Monthly blood loss in premenopausal women, imbalanced diet, and frequent blood donation can also contribute to low iron levels.

You can increase your hemoglobin/hematocrit level by increasing your intake of iron-rich foods. Here are some suggestions:

## IRON-RICH FOODS

**Meats:** Liver, Beef/Dried Beef, Pork, Ham, Chicken, Turkey, Lamb, Sardines, Shrimp, Clams, Oysters, Eggs

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Dried Beans/Peas, Beets, Greens, Raisins, Tomato Juice, Dried Apricots, Watermelon, Dates, Spinach, Prunes

**Breads and Cereals:** Whole-Grain Breads, Wheat Germ, Iron-Fortified Cereals, Enriched Bread and Noodles

**Other:** Molasses

## IRON FACTS

- About half of your body's iron is contained in your red blood cells.
- Vitamin C enhances the absorption of the iron you eat.
- Tannin in tea decreases the amount of iron you absorb by about 50%.
- Iron in meat is absorbed twice as efficiently as the iron in vegetables.
- More iron from vegetables can be absorbed if meat is eaten in the same meal.

**For more information, please call  
1-800-GIVE-LIFE or visit [bloodisneeded.org](http://bloodisneeded.org)**