

Iron in Pregnancy

What is iron?

Iron carries the oxygen around your body within your blood. If your blood is low in iron you may have anaemia. Everyone needs iron, when you are pregnant you need more than you usually have.

What happens if my iron is low?

If your iron is low you may feel; tired, look pale, be moody, the baby may not grow well, you will get sick more often, have trouble concentrating and you may have headaches.

Why is it different when I'm pregnant?

When you are pregnant you need more iron than usual. By now your blood volume is 50% higher than when you are not pregnant. This means more oxygen needs to get transported around your body to other cells, iron helps with this. You are also busy growing the baby's placenta. Iron also keeps your immune system strong and healthy.

Should I take iron supplements?

Your health care provider will advise you on taking supplements. Pregnancy vitamins usually have a quantity of iron in them. However, ferro grad C is sometimes added in conjunction with your usual vitamins, to supplement your iron. This can cause loose stools or constipation so let your care provider know if this occurs.

What foods are rich in iron?

Red meat, liver, chicken, turkey, tuna, beans, peanut butter, peanuts, whole grain cereals, spinach and green vegetables, raisins, dried apricots and prunes are all rich in iron.

What are the side effects of taking iron supplements?

The side effects of taking iron supplements include diarrhoea or constipation. These will often get better as your body gets use to the supplement.

Remember:

- Vitamin C helps your body uptake the iron.
- Caffeine reduces the uptake, so avoid.
- Drink a glass of juice when you take your supplement.
- Mix your iron rich foods with vitamin C rich foods.
- Taking iron will make your stools turn black, this is normal.
- keep your iron tablets out of reach of children, iron can be poisonous to children.

