



# Iron and iron deficiency

**Iron deficiency is common in people with undiagnosed and untreated coeliac disease because the area of the gut where iron is absorbed is damaged. This means that iron from foods isn't absorbed very well leading to iron deficiency. Around a quarter of adults are iron deficient when they are first diagnosed with coeliac disease.**

Iron is an essential part of haemoglobin, the red pigment in your blood, which you need to transport oxygen around your body. If your body's stores of iron are low, then you are iron deficient.

Iron deficiency is diagnosed by a simple blood test which measures your blood haemoglobin levels.

## Symptoms of iron deficiency:

- feeling tired all the time
- shortness of breath
- pale skin
- reduced concentration
- headaches.

## How much iron do I need?

If you have coeliac disease, you need the same amount of iron as people who don't have coeliac disease.

## Sources of iron

There are two types of iron:

- haem iron from animal sources
- non-haem iron from plant sources.

Age group	Iron requirements (per day)
<b>Children</b>	
0 - 3 months	1.7mg
4 - 6 months	4.3mg
7 - 12 months	7.8mg
1 - 3 years	6.9mg
4 - 6 years	6.1mg
7 - 10 years	8.7mg
<b>Males</b>	
11 -18 years	11.3mg
19 years +	8.7mg
<b>Females</b>	
11 - 50 years	14.8mg
50 years +	8.71mg

Animal sources of iron are better absorbed than those from plants. Sources of haem iron include:

- red meat
- liver (pregnant women should avoid liver and liver products because of the high vitamin A content).

Sources of non-haem iron include:

- dark green vegetables (kale)
- pulses (peas, beans and lentils)
- dried fruit (raisins, apricots, figs)
- nuts and seeds.



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## Call us for more information

Non-haem iron absorption can be reduced by tannins (found in tea) and polyphenols (found in coffee/cocoa). To improve your absorption, have food and drink rich in vitamin C, such as fruit juice, fresh green vegetables, potatoes and fruit (especially citrus fruits).

### Good sources of iron

Food per serving	Amount
Red meat, 90g	3mg
Chicken, 100g	0.5mg
Liver, 100g	11mg
Dried apricots, 80g	3mg
Dried figs, 80g	3mg
Cashew nuts, 24g	1.5mg
Sesame seeds, 24g	2.5mg
Chickpeas, 80g	1mg
Lentils, 80g	3mg
Spinach, 90g	1mg
Spring greens, 95g	1mg

If you're diagnosed with iron deficiency, iron supplements may be recommended by your GP or dietitian. Side effects of iron supplements can include nausea, constipation and stomach pain. Taking supplements with your meals may reduce side effects and, if you're concerned, talk to your GP.

Once you have been following a gluten-free diet for some time, your gut will begin to heal and your haemoglobin levels should increase as your iron absorption improves. If you're concerned that you aren't eating enough iron or you have symptoms of anaemia, talk to your dietitian or GP for individual advice about your diet.

This information is for guidance only and should not replace advice given by your healthcare professional.

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