

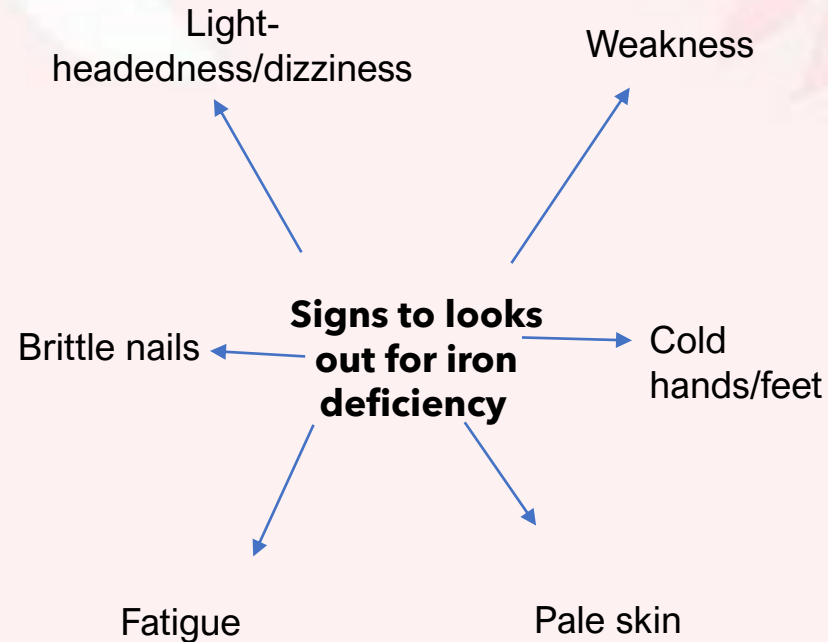
Mummy Nutrition

By Vicky, Luca & Lauren

Importance of iron intake in women of childbearing age and during pregnancy!

Did you know 54% of girls and 27% of women have low iron intake
(Public health England 2015/16)

Women in their reproductive years are at increased risk of iron deficiency due to changes in dietary habits and lifestyle.



Low iron is associated with iron deficiency anemia (IDA).
WHO guidelines for anaemia during pregnancy define a haemoglobin level of <11 g/dL at any time.

Importance of iron

- Maintaining good iron levels is important to keep hemoglobin levels normal and healthy.
- This is to maintain healthy immune system and decreases blood loss at delivery - this and reduces risk of blood transfusion
- Improve postnatal discovery
- Avoid decreased breast milk supply that is associated with severe anaemia.

Foods rich in iron

- 1. Red meat
- 2. Fish
- 3. Poultry

These contain a form of iron that is easily absorbed into the body.

- 1. Green vegetables (such as
- 2. Beans (kidney, edamame, chickpeas)
- 3. Nuts and seeds
- 4. Fortified cereal
- 5. Dark chocolate (>45%)

The type of iron contained in these foods is more difficult for the body to absorb and it is recommended that you also have a good intake of vitamin C in your diet to improve absorption.

How to maximise iron absorption:

Iron is absorbed in the form of **haem** and **non-haem**.

Haem iron is absorbed relatively easily whereas absorption of non-haem iron is influenced by meal composition.

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) has been shown to enhance the absorption of non-haem iron.

Vitamin C captures non-haem iron and stores it in a form more easily absorbed.

Therefore... iron supplements or foods fortified with iron are best absorbed with a source of vitamin C (e.g a glass of orange juice with your breakfast can help).

How much iron do I need?

Table 1: Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for iron [5]

Age	Female	Pregnancy	Lactation
14–18 years	15 mg	27 mg	10 mg
19–50 years	18 mg	27 mg	9 mg

During pregnancy it is recommended that women consume **27mg/day** of iron through diet and/or supplementation.

Recommended reading for further information:

- 1) Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, (2010). Iron and Health report
- 2) British Committee for Standards in Haematology, (2011). UK guidelines on the management of iron deficiency in pregnancy