



York Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Iron Rich Diet

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**Department of Nutrition and Dietetics**

Scarborough Hospital

Tel: 01723 342415

Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

The York Hospital

Tel: 01904 725269

Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction .....	3
Which foods contain iron? .....	4
Iron rich foods.....	5
How can I help the iron I eat work better? .....	6
Tell us what you think of this leaflet .....	7
Teaching, Training and Research .....	7
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	7
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats .....	8

# 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 pâté, 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:

Admin Team, Nutrition & Dietetic Department, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 725269, or email [nutrition&dietetics@york.nhs.uk](mailto:nutrition&dietetics@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](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

## Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電  
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

Bu bilgileri değişik bir lisanda ya da formatta istiyorsanız lütfen telefon ediniz ya da e-posta gönderiniz

Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: [access@york.nhs.uk](mailto:access@york.nhs.uk)

Owner	Berenice Carter, Professional Lead Dietetics
Date first issued	September 2015
Review Date	December 2023
Version	3 (issued December 2020)
Approved by	Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Document Reference	PIL 959 v3

© 2020 York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. All Rights reserved