Iron

WHAT IS IT?

Iron is an essential mineral necessary for oxygen transport and blood formation. It is also important for the immune and reproductive systems.

Iron comes in two forms, heme and non-heme. The heme form is from animal sources, such as cooked liver, beef, and the dark meat of chicken. The non-heme form is from plant sources, including several spices, tofu, and leafy greens. In the United States, most cereals are fortified with iron.

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Deficiency: Iron deficiency is the most common mineral deficiency in the world. Deficiency results in anemia, or low blood counts. Its symptoms include: feeling weak and tired, difficulty maintaining body temperature, and pale skin and gums. Anemia can be quite serious — it increases the stress on the heart and can even lead to heart attacks.

Iron is taken to replace deficiency. A healthcare provider should work to identify the reason for low iron prior to treating with iron supplements.

HOW DO I TAKE IT?

DOSE: Your health care provider will recommend the dose that is right for you.

The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of iron, or amount most Americans need to prevent deficiency, is 8 mg per day for adult men, 18 mg for adult women and 27 mg per day for pregnant women.

Iron supplements have varying amounts of elemental iron. Dosing for iron replacement should be based on elemental iron.

Iron is routinely found in multivitamin products. Iron is very important for teenage girls, young women who still get periods, and pregnant women. Iron supplementation should be avoided in post-menopausal women and men, unless otherwise instructed by your clinician.

Iron absorption can be greater when taken with vitamin C and food.

CONCERNS?

Iron can cause constipation and gastrointestinal distress. Iron interferes with absorption of many medications, including several antibiotics. Iron should not be taken within 3-4 hours of most medications that it interacts with (ask your pharmacist).

Iron supplements should not be taken by patients with iron overload states, such as hemochromatosis.

Excessive iron intake is dangerous. The upper tolerable limit is 45 mg per day total from food and supplements for healthy people over the age of 14. Do not exceed this dose unless instructed to by your health care provider. Ensure you keep any iron supplements away from young children to prevent accidental overdose, which has been associated with fatality. Many iron supplements resemble candy.

Make sure to ask your health care provider exactly how, when, and for how long you should take this product.

My Health Care Provider's Notes:

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