

Information about Maintaining Healthy Iron Levels

Iron: Your body – and everybody – needs it! Iron is an essential mineral that helps move oxygen to all the organs and tissues in your body, and helps turn food into energy. Your good health depends on iron, just like we depend on you as a blood donor. To support your donation commitment we would like to share new information about the impact of red blood cell donation on a donor's iron "stores." Recent studies involving young donors indicate that keeping iron stores adequate – so that your body can quickly replace your red blood cells after a donation – can be a challenge. Fortunately, your diet is the first resource for keeping iron stores in balance.

The best way to boost your iron level is to eat a healthy diet with plenty of iron-rich foods. These include beans, nuts, seeds, dark leafy greens, root vegetables, dried fruits, enriched and whole grain breads, lean red meats, shellfish, whole grains, and eggs. Maintain healthy iron levels by eating regular, nutritionally balanced meals, and drink plenty of fluids.

As well as following these dietary suggestions, iron supplements or vitamins containing iron are strongly recommended. The supplements are intended to replace the iron stores lost during blood donation to keep your iron stores in balance. Your body typically absorbs enough iron to replace what is lost during donation. Once stores are replaced, your body stops absorbing iron to prevent having too much iron in the body.

We have iron supplements available for you free-of-charge at all of our donation centers for pick up. We will also mail iron supplements to your home if your parents complete an online request form at BloodworksNW.org/IRON. Iron supplements are also widely available in many forms over-the-counter at drug stores or pharmacies. As you should with any medicine or supplement, please read the label carefully. People with a family history of hemochromatosis or symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease should not take iron supplements. Your healthcare provider can tell you if iron supplements are right for you.

Please visit BloodworksNW.org/IRON for more information about iron and your body.
