



Sacopee Valley Birthing Services

www.sacopeemidwives.org

Serving women in southern Maine and eastern New Hampshire.

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Iron Requirements During Pregnancy

- During pregnancy your blood volume expands, allowing for greater transportation of oxygen and nutrients to your baby. Due to your expanding blood volume, iron requirements increase during pregnancy.
- Iron is essential for the production of new red blood cells. This process begins early in the second trimester and peaks around the second half of pregnancy. This expanded blood volume not only allows for greater transportation of oxygen and nutrients to your baby, but it is also a protective measure for the normal blood loss that happens during birth.
- Iron deficiency occur because:
 - You lose more blood cells and iron than your body can replace
 - Your body does not do a good job of absorbing iron
 - Your body is able to absorb iron, but you are not eating enough foods that contain iron
 - Your body needs more iron than normal (such as if you are pregnant or breastfeeding)
- In general, even in cases of iron deficiency anemia, your baby will be protected and receive the adequate stores they need, at cost to you. Low iron levels can lead to anemia, fatigue, shortness of breath, and difficulty fighting infections.
- Adequate iron stores will help you feel more energized and provide your body with the necessary nutrients to expand your blood volume.

Building Your Blood and Iron Stores:

It is important to incorporate iron rich foods and supplement your diet with iron if your hemoglobin (RBC) count is low. Iron supplements work faster at building your blood supply than simply eating iron-rich foods. Doing both is ideal.

Take iron along with vitamin C, which helps its absorption, and away from calcium, soy, coffee, and tea, which decrease its absorption. Be aware that iron supplements may cause constipation, though not usually with those mentioned below. Also be aware that extra iron can turn your bowel movements dark in color while you are taking them (which is ok.) If you are noticing some constipation, ensure you are eating plenty of vegetables, and fiber, and drinking plenty of fluids.

Cooking with cast iron pots and pans can increase the iron content of food. Cooking acids in these is particularly helpful (such as cooking your tomato sauce in cast iron.)

Make sure you are getting at least 3 high-iron foods every day (see list below)

Yellow dock capsules (one 450mg capsule 2-3x daily. If diarrhea occurs, reduce dosage by one capsule) can also be taken as a tea or tincture. Yellow dock helps to boost iron, and decrease constipation.

Iron Supplements We Recommend:

- The golden rule is to first try to obtain the nutrients your body needs from the food you eat. However, even with adequate nutrition, some pregnant women will develop an iron deficiency. In such cases, iron supplementation is an effective way to increase your iron reserves and decrease the risk of developing iron deficiency anemia during pregnancy and the postpartum period.
- Iron deficiency anemia is the iron supplements.
- Here are a few iron supplements we commonly recommend:
 - **Floradix Iron & Herbs**
 - Provides maximum absorption by using a highly absorbable form of iron, iron gluconate.
 - Also contains B vitamins and vitamin C to enhance absorption, and herbal extracts to increase digestion.
 - 20 milligrams of Floradix provide the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of 15 mg of iron for women of child-bearing age.
 - Liquid supplement which allows for greater digestion and absorption
 - **Iron Food Complex by New Chapter**
 - Whole-food iron supplement in tablet form, combined with probiotic-cultured nutrients.
 - Suggested use is one tablet daily. Can be taken anytime, even on an empty stomach.
 - **Iron Extra by Vitonica**
 - Provides iron alongside vitamin C and several key herbal to increase absorption in capsule form.
 - Includes folic acid and vitamin B-12.

Nutrition:

Ensure you are staying well hydrated by drinking at least 10 cups of water or herbal tea throughout the day. Fluids need to be taken slowly but steadily.

Increase your intake of dark green leafy vegetables, both raw and steamed.

Don't overcook them though, because it denatures important nutrients.

Eat protein with every meal, and a good, balanced whole foods diet.

Eat foods rich in Vitamin K (like dark leafy greens), which is a nutrient necessary for blood clotting.

Increase your intake of vegetables and fruits that are high in vitamin C.

Chlorophyll is quite nutrient-dense, wonderfully nourishing to the body, and helps to raise hemoglobin. Eat 2-3 capsules daily (or drink green drink daily.)

Consider eating red meats, especially liver temporarily. Organic is best if you are able.

Complementary Herbal Medicines:

Drink the various teas below. Aim to get at least 4 cups of tea each day as part of your fluid intake.

Nettle-Raspberry-Alfalfa Tea: mix equal parts of each herb dried. Add 4-6 T. herbs to 4 c. cold water. Bring to a gentle simmer over low heat. Once it begins to simmer, remove from heat, cover, and let sit 20 minutes. Strain and drink at least 1/4 c. tea every half hour.

Nettle- a nourishing tonic, high in chlorophyll, vitamins, and minerals, vitamin K, and increases available hemoglobin.

Red Raspberry: full of available vitamins and minerals, is a wonderful uterine and bone tonic for women. Can add cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger to strengthen, and help alleviate tiredness and weakness.

Alfalfa leaf infusion increases vitamin K and hemoglobin in the blood.

Red Clover Tea: Boil 4 c. red clover blossoms with 1/2 t. powdered cinnamon and 8 c. water. Simmer 10 minutes, covered, then remove from heat and steep 20 minutes. Add honey if you wish. Drink one cup (hot or cold) before meals or as a beverage along with meals and snacks. Take for 10 days, let your body rest for 10 days, and repeat as necessary. This tea is rich in iron and minerals.

Hibiscus Tonic: add 1/2 c. dried hibiscus flowers and 1/4 t. powdered cinnamon to 4 c. water. Simmer, covered, for 5 minutes and let sit until cool. Add honey to taste. Hibiscus flowers are high in Vit. C.

Yellow dock, oat straw, and rose hips are also wonderful herbs to take at this time.

Supplements in addition to Iron:

Take one tablespoon of blackstrap molasses per day, which is high in iron.

Take 1 tablespoon of nutritional yeast or a food source vitamin B-complex supplement daily.

Vitamin C: take 2-5 g. per day of vitamin C with bioflavonoids (especially rutin.)

Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant and is wonderful in aiding healing.

Bioflavonoids help to strengthen blood vessel walls.

Zinc: take 25-50 mg daily along with Vitamin C. Zinc is important for healing tissue and is antioxidant.

Vitamin E: 600 IU daily can help your body build strong red blood cells, and is an antioxidant.

B-complex formula including vitamin B12 and folic acid.

Continue with your prenatal vitamins. Rainbow light, Spectrum 2C , and New Chapter are all high quality brands. And don't forget your Fish Oils!

Examples of Foods Listed Above:

Chlorophyll-rich foods: blue-green algae, spirulina, chlorella, wheat grass, barley grass, alfalfa grass juice, kelp, dandelion leaf. A favorite recipe is to make a spread by stirring together tahini, miso, and spirulina to taste, and adding a bit of water to thin it.

Dark Green Leafy Vegetables: chard, kale, spinach, leaf lettuces (not iceberg), mustard greens. cabbage, collards, beet greens, dandelion greens, amaranth greens, broccoli, broccoli rabe, bok choy, brussels sprouts, turnip greens, radish greens, endive, asparagus, turnip greens, radish greens, lambs quarters, arugula, watercress.

Dark green vegetables are high in many vitamins and minerals, and are also cleansing to your liver, which will help your body process toxins and stay healthy. Iron-Rich Foods: dark leafy greens, meat, eggs, blackstrap molasses, dairy products, dried figs, sea vegetables, bran (oat bran, wheat bran etc.), germ (wheat germ etc.), beans, amaranth, lentils, swiss chard, raisins, whole grains. Herbs: nettle leaf, red raspberry leaf, oat straw, yellow dock, dandelion root. Iron is important for general vitality, and for helping your blood to carry oxygen to your cells.

Vitamin C-Rich Foods: broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, citrus, melons, red and green peppers, cayenne pepper, baked potato, peaches, currants, strawberries, tomatoes, mango, turnip greens. Vitamin C supports all systems in your body. It is a wonderful antioxidant, and helps to protect your cells and keep your body healthy. It is also important for healing wounds, helping to form red blood cells, and protecting blood vessel walls.

Vitamin K-Rich Foods: alfalfa, dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, oats, soybeans, and lactobacillus-containing yogurt.

Iron Content of Meat and Fish

FOOD	SERVING SIZE	CALORIES	IRON (MGs)
MEAT, POULTRY, EGGS			
Beef (average cut)	3.5 oz., cooked	300	2.6
Pork (average cut)	3.5 oz., cooked	375	2.9
Lamb (average cut)	3.5 oz., cooked	260	1.2
Chicken (average cut)	3.5 oz., cooked	170	1.5
Liver (all kinds)	3.5 oz., cooked	200	8.5
Egg	1 egg	80	1.0
SEAFOOD			
Clams (soft shell)	4 large	82	3.4
Clams (hard shell)	5 large	80	7.5
Shrimp (canned)	0.5 cup	80	1.8
Oysters (Eastern)	5 - 8 medium	66	5.5
Oysters (Pacific)	2 - 4 medium	91	7.2

Iron Content of Selected Vegan Foods

FOOD	AMOUNT	IRON (mg)
Blackstrap molasses	2 Tbsp.	7.0
Lentils, cooked	1 cup	6.6
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup	6.3
Kidney beans, cooked	1 cup	5.2
Chickpeas, cooked	1 cup	4.7
Lima beans, cooked	1 cup	4.5
Pinto beans, cooked	1 cup	4.5
Black-eyed peas, cooked	1 cup	4.3
Swiss chard, cooked	1 cup	4.0
Tempeh	1 cup	3.8
Black beans, cooked	1 cup	3.6
Turnip greens, cooked	1 cup	3.2
Prune juice	8 oz	3.0
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	2.9

Beet greens, cooked	1 cup	2.7
Tahini	2 Tbsp	2.6
Raisins	1/2 cup	2.2
Cashews	1/4 cup	2.0
Figs, dried	5 medium	2.0
Bok choy, cooked	1 cup	1.8
Bulgur, cooked	1 cup	1.7
Apricots, dried	10 halves	1.6
Potato	1 large	1.4
Tomato juice	8 oz	1.4
Almonds	1/4 cup	1.3
Peas, cooked	1 cup	1.3
Green beans, cooked	1 cup	1.2
Kale, cooked	1 cup	1.2
Sesame seeds	2 Tbsp	1.2
Sunflower seeds	1/4 cup	1.2
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	1.1
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1 cup	1.1
Millet, cooked	1 cup	1.0
Prunes	5 medium	1.0
Watermelon	1/8 medium	1.0

Sources: USDA Nutrient Data Base for Standard Reference, Release 12, 1998. Manufacturer's information.