

# UTM EatWell

## “Low Iron”

Low levels of iron can lead to poor concentration, fatigue and irritability. If your iron stores are just slightly low, you may just need to eat more iron-rich foods on a daily basis. If you have very low iron or “anemia”, it is very difficult to get depleted iron stores back to normal with food alone, so your health-care provide may suggest an iron supplement – it is important to take this as recommended. At the same time, begin to eat more iron-rich foods, so that you can prevent anemia from happening in the future.

## Iron from Food

- “Heme” iron is found in meat, poultry, fish and seafood. It is the best source of iron as it is the most easily absorbed by the body.
- “Non-heme” iron comes from grains, vegetables, beans, eggs and nuts and is not as easily absorbed compared to heme iron, so vegetarians need to choose foods carefully to prevent iron-deficiency.
- To help your body absorb iron at meals and snacks, include a fruit, vegetable or juice that is high in vitamin C (e.g. berries, orange juice, tomatoes, or red peppers) with your iron-rich foods.
- Avoid drinking coffee or tea within 1 hour of eating your food, as coffee and tea inhibit iron absorption.

## Best Food Sources of (Heme) Iron

- **Clams, oysters, mussels**
- **Red meat (beef, lamb, goat) – especially liver**
- **Poultry (chicken, turkey) – especially dark meat**
- **Fish & seafood**



## Food Sources of (Non-heme) Iron

- **Pumpkin seeds**
- **Tofu**
- **Beans (kidney, white, black or pinto beans), lentils and chickpeas**
- **Eggs**
- **Nuts (almonds, walnuts)**
- **Dried fruits (apricots, prunes, raisins)**
- **Oatmeal and Cream of wheat**
- **Cereal - look for 50% DV (Daily Value) or more for iron on the Nutrition Facts label –ex. Raisin Bran or Fibre 1 Honey Clusters**



### How much iron do I need?

**Females (age 14-18) – 15 mg/day**

**Males (age 14-18) – 11 mg/day**

**Females (age 19-50) – 18 mg/day**

**Males (age 19-50) – 8 mg/day**

Reference: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dietary Reference Intakes (2006)

### Iron supplements

Iron supplements contain a higher dose (150 mg or more) to aid in replacing lost iron stores. Supplements can cause your poo to turn black, which is not harmful and is nothing to worry about. Iron supplements can also cause constipation, so you will need to drink lots of fluids and eat more fibre (whole-wheat cereal and bread, brown rice, beans, chickpeas, fruit with the peel, potato with the skin on).



The Health & Counselling Centre at UTM (Davis Building, Room 1123) has a **Registered Dietitian** who can assess your diet and help you make changes.

**Call (905) 828-5255 to make an appointment. Free for UTM students!**