Iron Food Sources Available through SLO Food Bank

**PLANT BASED**

- Beans
- Lentils
- Flour Tortillas
- Bread (enriched or whole grain)
- Pastas (enriched or whole grain)
- Breakfast cereals (fortified)
- Oats
- Nuts and Seeds
- Peanut Butter
- Dried Fruits
- Broccoli
- Dark Leafy Greens (spinach or kale)
- Potatoes w/Skin

**MEAT, POULTRY, AND FISH**

**Canned, Fresh, or Frozen**

- Chicken
- Beef
- Pork
- Eggs
- Tuna
- Shellfish (clams, shrimp, oysters)
- Sardines

**THE TWO TYPES OF IRON**

**Heme Iron** and **Non-heme Iron**

Heme-iron comes from animal sources.
Non-heme iron comes from plant and animal sources.

The primary difference between these forms of iron is how readily they are absorbed by the body. Heme-iron is more readily absorbed for the body's use. People can still meet their iron needs through non-heme iron with careful dietary choices (see Plant Based & Increase Iron Absorption sections for more information on dietary choices).
Iron deficiency can occur when we don’t obtain enough iron through our diets or with certain medical conditions. Iron deficiency anemia occurs when the depletion of iron stores results in a significant reduction in number of healthy red blood cells. This can cause weakness, fatigue, impaired cognition, pale skin and more.

Oppositely, iron overload can occur and become toxic to the body in certain situations involving different health conditions. It can also occur from over supplementation. Iron overload does not typically occur through diet.

**What is iron?**

An essential trace mineral required for the transport of oxygen in our bodies and for energy metabolism. The proper amount of iron stores in our bodies is essential for our health.

### Iron and My Health

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### How Much Do I Need Daily?

**Recommended Dietary Allowances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Daily Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1-3 years</td>
<td>7 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 4-8 years</td>
<td>10 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 9-13 years</td>
<td>8 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 14-18 years (Males)</td>
<td>11 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 14-18 years (Females)</td>
<td>15 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 19+ years (Males)</td>
<td>8 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 19-50 years (Females)</td>
<td>18 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 51+ years (Females)</td>
<td>8 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Babies and Females (who are nursing or pregnant) have specific recommendations that are not listed. Monitoring iron status with a doctor during these times is beneficial.*

### Increase Iron Absorption

- Consume food sources with heme iron.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- Eat foods high in Vit C (e.g., oranges, strawberries) with iron food sources.
  - Vit C aids in the storage of non-heme iron.
- Choose enriched or fortified breads, pastas, and cereals.
- Consume coffee and tea outside of mealtimes.
  - Tannins in the coffee and tea may inhibit iron absorption.
- Eat your iron rich and calcium rich meals at different times.
  - Calcium may inhibit iron absorption.
- Your doctor may recommend taking an iron supplement.