

Importance of Iron during pregnancy

Iron helps produce hemoglobin which is the oxygen carrying protein in red blood cells. During pregnancy, iron enables oxygen flow to both mother and baby and is also stored in the unborn baby's liver for use during the first six months postpartum.

Hemoglobin (the amount of oxygen carrying protein per red blood cell) and Hematocrit (the percentage of red blood cells per entire blood volume) indicate iron levels in the bloodstream. A woman's hemoglobin and hematocrit will be tested several times during her pregnancy and a level below 10/30 (10=hemoglobin; 30=hematocrit) is considered too low (Anemia).

A woman's blood volume increases up to 50% during pregnancy. Because the plasma, or fluid portion, of the blood increases more rapidly than the red blood cells, hematocrit often decreases in the second trimester. Although there is a temporary decrease in hematocrit, those levels should be restored after the 28th week of pregnancy. Some blood loss in childbirth is normally tolerated due to the increase in blood volume during pregnancy; however, substantial bleeding (hemorrhage) at time of delivery can deplete necessary iron stores. **Maintaining adequate iron stores thus prevents postpartum anemia, supplies the baby with oxygen in utero, and equips baby for an exclusively breastfed diet postpartum.**

Getting iron into your system~

Diet:

Mild anemia can often be treated by eating foods or drinking teas which contain iron.

Iron-rich food include: liver, lean meats, whole grain cereals, some nuts, dried fruits and molasses. Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron, so **including citrus fruits/juices, tomatoes, or green pepper in the iron-rich diet is essential.** Try to eat one iron-rich food accompanied by Vitamin C at each meal.

Meal preparation:

Foods cooked in cast iron pans will absorb some iron while cooking. Acidic foods, such as tomatoes, absorb iron from the pan best.

Supplements:

Recommended iron preparations are:

Ferrous sulfate, ferrous gluconate, Floradix (herbal preparation), and Trihemic

(prescription only). Take supplements with juice or water at least one hour prior to eating or two hours after. Do not take with milk or antacids. Spread the daily dose out over the entire day.