



## **Blood Donors:** **Recommended Foods to Maintain Your Iron Levels**

About 10% of people who attempt to donate blood are deferred because of a low blood count. This is actually one of the most common reasons for being deferred from donating blood but don't be discouraged. There are many things you can do to build up the iron levels in your body and get ready to donate blood!

The most common treatment for iron or vitamin deficiency is to eat more iron-and vitamin-rich foods however, we recommend that if a donor follows a vegetarian or vegan diet that they take an iron supplement starting two weeks before their appointment to donate blood.

- Meats are some of the best sources of iron, including beef, organ meats, pork, poultry, fish, clams, and oysters.
- Iron is found in other foods such as eggs, dairy products, and some vegetables, but it is often harder to absorb iron from these types of food. Examples of these foods include dried beans and peas, iron-fortified cereals, bread, pasta products, dark green leafy vegetables (chard, spinach, mustard greens, kale), dried fruits, nuts, and seeds.
- It can also be helpful to eat foods which contain vitamin C along with iron-rich foods to help the body absorb iron from the food you eat. Vitamin C can be found in citrus fruits, berries, potatoes, broccoli, sprouts, tomatoes, peppers and kiwis.
- Vitamin B12 is naturally found in foods that come from animals including fish, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and milk products.
- Fortified breakfast cereals are a particularly valuable source of vitamin B12.
- Food that are rich in folate include citrus fruits and juices and dark green leafy vegetables.
- Breads, cereals, flours, corn meals, pastas, rice, and other grain products are a major source of folic acid.
- The recommendation is that men who donate 3x or more a year and women of childbearing age who donate more than 2x a year consider iron supplements.

For more information about Anemia and Nutrition and Anemia and Blood Donations read the information on the National Anemia Action Council website:

[www.anemia.org/patients/blood-donation](http://www.anemia.org/patients/blood-donation)

**See you at the blood drive!**

[donateblood@rwjbh.org](mailto:donateblood@rwjbh.org)

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