

FAQS ABOUT HEMOGLOBIN



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WHAT IS HEMOGLOBIN?

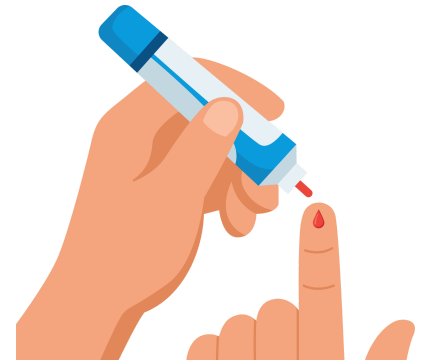
Hemoglobin is a protein, in red blood cells, that contains iron. It carries oxygen from your lungs to the rest of your body.

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WHY IS CHECKING HEMOGLOBIN IMPORTANT?

A hemoglobin test is a screen for anemia. A **Low hemoglobin level may mean your iron level is low too.**

Low amounts of iron in your blood can put you at risk for a health condition called iron-deficiency anemia.



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WHAT CAUSES LOW HEMOGLOBIN OR LOW IRON?

- Blood loss during menstruation (your period)
- Rapid growth—like pregnancy or early childhood
- Consuming too much calcium or caffeine

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HOW WOULD I KNOW IF MY IRON IS LOW?

If WIC tells you your hemoglobin is low, tell your doctor. Your doctor can do a different blood test to check your iron. Signs of low iron can include:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath during physical activity
- Headaches
- Irregular heartbeat
- Skin that is paler or yellower than usual

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WHAT CAN I DO IF MY HEMOGLOBIN OR IRON IS LOW?

A. AIM TO EAT FOODS WITH IRON AT EACH MEAL.

Good sources of iron include: (**bold foods** may be in your WIC food package)

- Beef
- Shrimp
- **Cereals, bread and pasta with iron added (iron-fortified)**
- **Beans, peas, and lentils**
- **Tofu, eggs, nuts, and spinach**



IMPORTANT REMINDER:

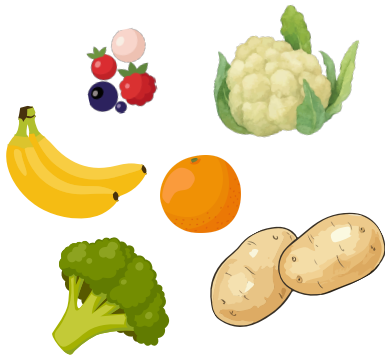
If you are pregnant, make sure the foods you eat are always fully cooked.

B. TRY TO EAT FOODS HIGH IN VITAMIN C WITH FOOD HIGH IN IRON.

Vitamin C helps your body absorb more iron from the foods you eat.

Good sources of Vitamin C include: (**bold foods** may be in your WIC food package)

- Fruit like **berries, kiwis, mangos, melons, oranges, papaya, and tangerines**
- Vegetables like **bell peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, spinach, and potatoes**



C. EAT THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CALCIUM.

Calcium is good for your bones, but too much could keep you from getting enough iron.

- Eat dairy foods 1 to 2 hours after you eat foods with iron.
- Take vitamins with water instead of milk.

How much milk do I need?

- Children only need 16 ounces (2 cups) of dairy each day.
- Adults only need 24 ounces (3 cups) of dairy each day.

D. LIMIT COFFEE OR TEA WHEN YOU EAT FOODS HIGH IN IRON.

Compounds in coffee and some teas (tannins and polyphenols) can stop your body from absorbing iron in food.

- Drink them between meals to help your body use iron from the foods you eat (instead of during meals).
- Keep the amount of coffee or tea you drink to 1 to 2 cups each day.



E. ASK YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU NEED TO TAKE A VITAMIN OR IRON SUPPLEMENT.

Pregnant women should take a prenatal or multivitamin every day unless a doctor tells you not to.