

ANEMIA

The Dietary Influences

Anemia is a condition marked by a deficiency of red blood cells. A nutritional deficiency typically underlies anemia—usually a deficiency of iron, vitamin B12 or folic acid.

Anemia from a B12 deficiency, known as pernicious anemia is common among strict vegans, especially if they do not eat the unusual plants and/or fermented foods that contain B12. Having insufficient Intrinsic Factor in the stomach will also contribute to B12 deficiency, as it is required for uptake of B12. Adequate hydrochloric acid is needed for sufficient Intrinsic Factor.

Anemia from an iron deficiency is the most common. Increasing iron-rich foods in the diet can help this. However, it is important to understand that it is necessary to have adequate vitamin C in order for the iron to be absorbed.

Iron Absorption

When attempting to increase iron in the diet, it is important to know that there are two types of iron: heme and nonheme. Heme iron comes from meat, poultry and fish. Nonheme iron comes from plant foods. Heme iron is absorbed 2-3 times more efficiently. This means if you are attempting to get your iron from plant sources (vegetarian), you will need much more than you would need to consume if you were consuming iron from animal sources.

Other essentials needed for absorption of iron are: adequate hydrochloric acid in the stomach, as well as adequate Vitamin c, Folic Acid and Vitamin B-

12. Foods and drinks that can inhibit the absorption of iron include regular teas, coffee, chocolate, dairy products, red wine, beer, EDTA, and large amounts of soft drinks. Excess zinc can also contribute to anemia. In excess, zinc can result in a copper deficiency, which is associated with anemia.

Heme iron can be found most abundantly in beef, beef liver and other organ meats. Look for high quality grass fed beef and beef liver.

Nonheme iron can be found most abundantly in the following plant-based foods: Malungay, Sea Vegetables, Bran Flakes, Molasses, Brewer's Yeast, Oatmeal, Chard, Dandelion Greens, Spinach, Strawberries, Blackberries, Beetroot, Carrots, Chickpeas, Prunes, Lentils, Pumpkin Seeds, Parsley, Wheatgrass, Alfalfa, Morel Mushrooms, Lemongrass, Bell Peppers and Almonds. And Anise tea enhances iron absorption.

Although Spirulina is incredibly high in iron, the iron is bound in molecules that are not bio-available, so it is not an ideal source of iron.

If you suspect you may be anemic or low in iron due to symptoms (fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, cold hands/feet, weakness or irregular heartbeats), please see your Medical Doctor for testing. The sooner you know, the sooner you can start feeling better. ♦