



## THE IMPORTANCE OF IRON IN BLOOD DONATION

### DONOR SAFETY

Prior to collecting a blood donation, the Red Cross determines how safe it is for a donor to give blood. One way is to measure a donor's hematocrit level to help determine the volume of oxygen-carrying red cells in the blood. A low hematocrit level means the donor lacks enough red blood cells to share. In this case, the donor is temporarily deferred from donating blood.

### IMPORTANCE OF IRON

Iron is necessary in building the proteins of red blood cells, which help carry oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body. These red blood cells help the body metabolize energy and stay healthy.

Different factors may contribute to low levels of iron and, thus, a low concentration of red blood cells. These include: (a) the monthly loss of blood during menstruation among women, (b) the high carbohydrate diets and high levels of physical activity of athletes and (c) frequent blood donation.

### A WELL-BALANCED DIET

A well-balanced diet with plenty of iron-rich foods helps maintain a healthy hematocrit level and helps ensure that donors are eligible to give blood. Donors who are deferred because of a low hematocrit level can reschedule an appointment and return to donate at a later time.

The following foods are high in iron content.	
Meat and fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lean red meat (beef, venison, etc.)</li> <li>• Chicken liver</li> <li>• Clam and shrimp</li> <li>• Pork</li> </ul>
Legumes, Nuts & Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lentils</li> <li>• Kidney beans, soy beans</li> <li>• Almonds, hazelnuts, cashews</li> <li>• Pumpkin seeds and sesame seeds</li> </ul>
Vegetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baked potatoes and sweet potatoes with skin</li> <li>• Beets and beet greens</li> <li>• Spinach, chard, asparagus and artichokes</li> </ul>
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits: watermelon, peaches, and apricots</li> <li>• Dried fruits: dates and plums (prunes)</li> </ul>
Breads & Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fortified cereals, oatmeal and cream of wheat</li> <li>• Wheat germ and whole grains</li> <li>• Gingerbread or products made with molasses</li> </ul>

Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron. Foods high in Vitamin C include citrus fruits, raspberries, strawberries, tomatoes and broccoli.

It is recommended that donors avoid beverages with tannin concentrations, which inhibit iron absorption, during meals. These include coffee, tea and red wine.

To schedule a blood donation appointment, please call 1-800 GIVE LIFE.  
For more information, visit [www.HelpSaveALife.org](http://www.HelpSaveALife.org)