



Iron

Iron is an essential mineral which is required by the body for a number of functions, including formation of haemoglobin, which transports oxygen around the body; and assisting in energy-production. A decrease in iron leads to a reduction in haemoglobin, which in turn leads to a lowered oxygen supply to the muscles and impaired performance.

There are two types of iron found in foods. Haem iron is found in animal foods, mainly red meat but small amounts are also found in chicken, fish and offal. This type of iron is absorbed easily by the body. On the other hand, Non-haem iron which is found in eggs and plant foods such as legumes, wholegrain breads/cereals, nuts, seeds and green leafy vegetables, is generally not as well absorbed by the body.

There are ways to increase the absorption of Non-haem iron foods;

- Consuming these foods with a source of Vitamin C (orange juice, citrus fruits, tomato, strawberries)
- Avoid drinking tea and coffee with meals containing Iron sources

Other ways to increase your iron intake;

- Consuming red meat 2-3 times a week
- Consuming Iron fortified cereals
- If required, speak to your doctor about iron supplements
- Avoid taking calcium supplements with iron containing meals

VIS Sports Dietitian, Kylie Andrew