



THE BLOOD CENTER
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FACTS ABOUT HEMOGLOBIN

What Does a Low Hemoglobin Level Mean?

If you have been deferred today as a blood donor because of a low hemoglobin level, it does not necessarily mean that you are anemic or can not donate in the future. In fact, in most cases a simple change in your diet is all that is needed to increase your hemoglobin level (and improve your overall health too!).

What Is Hemoglobin?

Iron combines with certain proteins to become hemoglobin in the red blood cells. Iron is present in small amounts in the body. It carries oxygen to the body's tissues. Too little iron - and hemoglobin - can trigger an internal energy crisis because oxygen helps convert food into energy.

Iron-rich foods help promote blood regeneration. You can increase the amount of iron in your body by eating foods high in Vitamin C as well as ones rich in iron. Drinking tea and coffee decreases iron absorption, and should be avoided by people who suffer from anemia.

High Iron Foods

Foods poor in iron generally have a noticeable lack of pigment. With a few exceptions, such as the potato and enriched white bread, a rule-of-thumb is that white foods are not good builders of red blood cells. Foods to focus on are:

Beet greens
Clams
Dried beans or peas
Ham
Lean beef and pork
Prunes or prune juice
Scallops
Tuna
Whole-grain breads

Chard
Dates
Eggs
Iron-fortified cereal
Molasses (blackstrap)
Raisins
Shrimp
Turkey

Chicken
Dried apricots and peaches
Enriched breads
Liver and liver sausage
Oysters
Sardines
Spinach
Wheat germ