

# BLOOD DONOR HEMOGLOBIN CARE KIT

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## MY HEMOGLOBIN IS LOW. DOES THIS MEAN I'M ANEMIC?

Hemoglobin is found in your red blood cells (RBCs) and is what gives your blood its red color. Its main function is to carry oxygen throughout the body and carry away carbon dioxide. When your hemoglobin level does not meet our criteria, you may be temporarily deferred. Since many factors can play a part in low hemoglobin, and the state is often temporary, it doesn't necessarily mean you are anemic.

It is always a good idea to eat a good meal within four hours before donating, and drink plenty of water before and after your donation. It is advisable to avoid caffeinated drinks right before you donate.

A doctor must review a patient's symptoms and examine a patient before diagnosing him or her with anemia. A complete blood count is needed to confirm anemia and measure its severity.

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*Here are some things you should know in order to increase or maintain a sufficient hemoglobin level to donate blood.*

### FACTS

- If you have been deferred as a blood donor because of low hemoglobin levels (low iron), it does NOT mean you are anemic or cannot donate blood in the future. In most cases a simple change in our diet is all that is needed to increase your hemoglobin level.
- Iron, when combined with certain proteins, becomes hemoglobin in red blood cells.
- Iron is a vital mineral used to generate energy.
- Every human cell contains iron.
- 80 percent of the iron found in the body is contained in hemoglobin.
- Women are more prone to having low iron, since they experience blood loss during menstruation, and they often eat less than men.
- Women need more iron than men, particularly during childbearing years.
- People who donate blood should pay special attention to their diets in order to maintain iron levels.
- It is not only necessary to eat food rich in iron, it is also necessary to eat in a way which maximizes iron absorption.
- Iron supplements are not as well absorbed as iron from food, thus higher doses are usually necessary.

### WAYS TO INCREASE HEMOGLOBIN (hgb)

- Eat several servings of iron rich foods daily in meals and snacks.
- Eat foods rich in vitamin C at the same time you eat foods rich in iron. Vitamin C helps iron absorption.
- Prepare food by cooking slowly in iron cookware. Contact with iron increases iron in food.
- Eat iron-enriched or fortified foods such as breads and cereals.
- Avoid consuming tea, coffee, soy, fiber and nuts during and after meals or snacks with iron-rich foods, since these foods reduce iron absorption.

### IRON-RICH FOODS

- Meats, fish and poultry provide about a third of the iron in the average diet.
- Red meat, brown legumes (beans and peas), dark green leafy vegetables and dried fruit make the greatest contribution of iron to the diet.
- Whole grain or enriched breads and cereal provide about a third of the iron in the average diet.

Sources: Whitney, et al. *Understanding Normal & Clinical Nutrition*; Standfield's *Nutrition and Diet Therapy*; and "What Does a Low Hemoglobin Level Mean?" from Florida Georgia Blood Alliance.

### POSSIBLE FOOD CHOICES

Oysters	Liverwurst
Beef	Fish
Liver	Clams
Pork	Turkey
Chicken	Sardines
Shrimp	
Braunschweig Sausage	

Tofu	Fresh Parsley
Spinach	Broccoli
Turnip Greens	Collards
Raisins	Dates
Dried Apricots	Prune Juice
Dried Peaches	
Canned Sauerkraut	

Lima Beans	Navy Beans
Black Eyed Peas	Green Peas
Soybeans	Green beans
Kidney beans	Whole Grains
Iron-Fortified Bread & Cereal	

### VITAMIN C SOURCES FOR IRON ABSORPTION

Grapefruit	Green Peppers
Oranges	Cabbage
Greens	Broccoli
Cantaloupe	Cauliflower
Strawberries	Watermelon
Tomatoes	
Vitamin C fortified juices	