

## Iron in the cystic fibrosis diet

Cystic Fibrosis Trust is grateful to the dietitians from the British Dietetic Association Cystic Fibrosis Specialist Group who prepared the information in this leaflet.

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## Introduction

The information here was written by cystic fibrosis (CF) dietitians who work with adults. The information can be used by anyone with CF over 10 years of age. If you are looking for information about iron for your baby or child (someone under the age of 16) speak to your child's dietitian for personalised advice.

## Iron and iron deficiency anaemia

Iron from the diet is used to make red blood cells, which carry oxygen in the blood. If the body's store of iron becomes low, you cannot make red blood cells and may develop symptoms of iron deficiency anaemia.

Iron deficiency anaemia can make you feel tired and breathless, low in energy and irritable, and it can also reduce your appetite.

If you have CF, these symptoms could make you feel more unwell, particularly when you have a chest infection. Iron deficiency anaemia is easily preventable if you regularly eat foods containing iron.

## Recommended daily iron intake

The table below details the recommendations for daily iron intake according to age and gender.

Age	Iron intake per day
Children aged 7–10 years old	9mg
Girls aged 11–18 years	15mg
Boys aged 11–18 years	11mg
Men	9mg
Women	15mg

## Iron and vitamin C

As well as eating a varied diet including foods containing iron, it is important to eat some food containing vitamin C at the same time. This helps the body to absorb the iron in the food.

Good sources of vitamin C include fruit juices and cordials (eg blackcurrant juice, Ribena® or other fortified blackcurrant cordials). Orange juice, oranges, tangerines, satsumas and strawberries are also high in vitamin C.



## Have regular mealtimes

Eating a varied diet, including foods that are good sources of iron, can help prevent low levels of iron and anaemia.

## Meat and meat products

Red meat such as beef and lamb are very good sources of iron because the body is more able to absorb these. The best sources of iron come from offal foods (eg liver, kidney).

Food	Amount of iron
2 faggots (meatballs made from minced off-cuts and offal)	12.5mg
2 slices of lambs liver	8mg
8oz (raw weight) of rump steak	4mg
2 tablespoons of minced beef	3mg
Individual steak and kidney pie	3mg
1 large slice of roast beef	2mg
3 slices of roast lamb (90g)	2mg
Liver pate (45g)	3mg

Chicken, pork and turkey do not contain a good source of iron, but can still be included in your diet.

## Other sources of iron

Iron is also found in cereals, pulses, beans and fruit. The body is less able to absorb the iron from these plant and vegetable sources compared to meat products, but you should still try to include these in your diet.

A bowl of fortified breakfast cereal (e.g. Rice Krispies®, Frosties®, Cheerios®, Ready Brek®) is also a good source of iron, containing 3–5 mg per portion.

Food	Amount of iron
Chick peas (half a tin)	6mg
Small tin of sardines in tomato sauce	5mg
Liquorice Allsorts® (small bag)	4mg
Bowl of lentil dahl	3mg
Small bag of cashew nuts	3mg
Small tin of baked beans	2mg
Wholemeal bread (2 slices)	2mg
1 medium chapatti	2mg
Toasted teacake	2mg
Malt loaf (2 slices)	2mg
2 fried/boiled eggs	2mg
1 large Scotch egg	2mg
Soya mince (100g)	2.6mg
1 large slice of rich fruit cake	1.5mg
Small handful of dried fruit (eg raisins)	1.5mg
Small bar of dark chocolate	1mg
Small bag of dry-roasted peanuts	1mg

## Sample meal plan

Below is a sample meal plan, showing how foods high in iron can be included in your diet. This plan could provide up to 20mg of iron.

### Breakfast

- Fortified breakfast cereal with milk and a glass of orange juice

### Mid-morning

- Two slices of malt loaf

### Lunch

One of the following:

- Two slices of wholemeal bread with two slices of roast beef
- Bean/lentil soup with bread and butter
- Baked beans on two slices of wholemeal bread and a bar of dark chocolate

Your choice to be eaten with a fruit squash containing added vitamin C

### Mid-afternoon

- Toasted teacake

### Evening meal

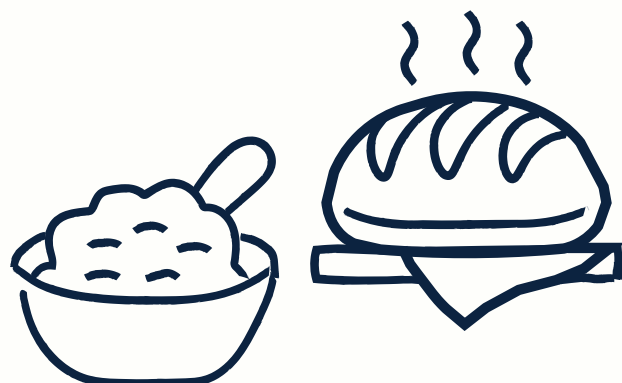
One of the following:

- Steak and chips
- Two fried eggs on two slices of wholemeal toast
- Lentil curry and two chapattis
- Three bean chilli and rice

Your choice to be eaten with a fruit squash with added vitamin C.

## Absorbing iron

Drinks such as tea, coffee, red wine and cocoa around meal times make it harder for your body to use the iron from your meal. This means you might not be getting as much iron as you think you are. Try to wait at least half an hour between having these drinks and eating meals. Try a glass of fruit juice or water at mealtimes instead. Other things can affect how well your body can absorb iron such as: other foods such as eggs, spinach and some nuts. supplements such as calcium or, other health conditions, especially ones affecting the gut such as inflammatory bowel disease or coeliac disease. If you have low iron, speak with your health care professional about these other factors too. If you need help looking at how much iron you get from your diet, speak to your dietitian.



## Space for meal plan ideas

A large, empty rectangular area with a light beige background, intended for writing meal plan ideas.



## Further information

Find more information resources about living with cystic fibrosis at [cysticfibrosis.org.uk/information](https://cysticfibrosis.org.uk/information).

Our Helpline is open 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday. It's available to anyone looking for information or support with any part of cystic fibrosis, a listening ear, or just to talk things through.

How to reach us:

- Call **0300 373 1000** or **020 3795 2184**
- Email [helpline@cysticfibrosis.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cysticfibrosis.org.uk)
- Chat with us on **Facebook, Twitter or Instagram**
- Message us on WhatsApp on **07361 582053**

Visit [cysticfibrosis.org.uk/helpline](https://cysticfibrosis.org.uk/helpline) for more information.

We welcome your feedback on our resources.

You can also ask for this resource in large print or as a text file.  
Email [infoteam@cysticfibrosis.org.uk](mailto:infoteam@cysticfibrosis.org.uk).

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This leaflet has been designed to be given out by a CF dietitian, along with their advice. If you downloaded or requested it directly from Cystic Fibrosis Trust we would advise you to discuss this information with your CF dietitian.

The information in this leaflet is based on clinical best practice and a consensus of opinion by dietitians within the British Dietetic Association Cystic Fibrosis Specialist Group. For detailed guidance on CF nutrition, please see the **Consensus document on nutritional management of cystic fibrosis**. Our consensus documents as well as other publications about cystic fibrosis can be found at [cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications](https://cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications) or they can be ordered through our Helpline.

**The information in this leaflet is general, please discuss it with your dietitian for a more personalised look at the topic.**

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The information in this resource does not replace any advice from your doctor or CF team. It is important that you seek your team's advice whenever you want to change your treatment.

# Cystic Fibrosis Trust

Cystic Fibrosis Trust is the charity uniting people to stop cystic fibrosis. Our community will improve care, speak out, support each other and fund vital research as we race towards effective treatments for all.

We won't stop until everyone can live without the limits of cystic fibrosis.

[cysticfibrosis.org.uk](https://cysticfibrosis.org.uk)

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