

Iron Repletion Protocol

1. Eat clams, oysters, beef and chicken liver, beef, and lamb regularly throughout the week. These are the highest food sources of highly absorbable heme iron. (Note that nonheme iron found in plant foods is poorly absorbed compared to heme iron, which is found exclusively in animal foods.) Plan your meals in advance each week to ensure that you are eating one of these foods daily.
2. Take 250 mg of vitamin C (as ascorbic acid) and 200 to 1,200 mg of betaine hydrochloric acid (HCl) with meals. These substances increase iron absorption significantly. If you are taking proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) or other acid-suppressing drugs, please speak with your clinician before taking HCl.
3. Avoid consuming substances that impair iron absorption—including tea, coffee, dairy products, supplemental fiber, and supplemental calcium and zinc—with meals.
4. If you tolerate it, consider a glass of wine or other alcohol with dinner, as alcohol also improves iron absorption.
5. Cook in cast iron whenever possible.
6. Don't smoke. Tobacco smoking robs the body of oxygen and depletes the immune system, which is already challenged with iron deficiency.
7. If the steps recommended above do not improve your iron levels, and/or your clinician suggests it, take a heme iron (e.g., Proferrin ES) supplement at the dose your clinician recommends.