

## Iron and vitamin C in pregnancy

### Iron and vitamin C

Iron is a key nutrient during pregnancy – your blood cells need iron in order to transport extra oxygen around and your baby needs it for their developing brain. If you're running low on iron you could develop anaemia which will leave you feeling tired, washed-out, short of breath and generally unwell.

When you have your first antenatal appointments, you'll be routinely tested for anemia. This will be done by analysing both the haemoglobin levels and the number of red blood cells in your blood. While it's common for your haemoglobin levels to be lower during pregnancy, you'll only be prescribed iron supplements if they are very low.

For most pregnant women, including lots of iron-rich foods in your diet such as red meat, fish, eggs, dried fruit, wholegrain breakfast cereals and breads, and green leafy vegetables should keep your iron levels where they need to be.

### Good sources of iron

- Lean meat (make sure it's well cooked) and oily fish, like sardines
- Dark green vegetables such as broccoli, watercress, spinach and kale
- Nuts, especially cashew nuts
- Beans and pulses such as chick-peas and lentils
- Wholegrains such as wholemeal bread, brown rice and iron-fortified breakfast cereals
- Dried fruits like apricots, prunes and raisins
- Eggs

### Vitamin C helps your body to absorb iron

Whether you're taking it in pill form or tucking into a steak, iron is best absorbed if ingested alongside vitamin C, so wash down your iron-rich meal or supplement with a glass of fruit juice, or eat fresh fruit with or after your meal.

However, you should avoid drinking tea or coffee within an hour of your meal as they actually reduce iron absorption.

Our nutritionist and midwives have plenty of suggestions for getting more iron into your diet. Give them a call on **08457 623 628** or try an instant online Live Chat.