

## Pumping Iron

No, I'm not talking about lifting weights (though you won't hear me complaining if you you'd like to try that, too). I'm talking about pumping more iron into your body. There's a popular fallacy that the best source of iron is beef, but there are iron-rich plant foods that are much healthier for you.



Iron rich foods include all legumes (beans, soybeans, lentils, chickpeas, etc.), sesame seeds, squash seeds, spinach and other dark leafy greens, and most nuts.

So why is iron important? Iron is necessary to create hemoglobin, the substance that carries oxygen from our lungs to every tissue in our bodies.

Here are a few easy ways to get more iron into your diet:

- Sprinkle sesame or pumpkin seeds onto a spinach salad or soups.
- Eat hummus as a spread on sandwiches, or as a dip for broccoli, red peppers, or other favorite vegetables.
- Grind up cashews in a spice grinder and sprinkle over food as a parmesan replacement (it really works!)
- Try blanching your veggies. If you find the taste of dark greens to be too bitter, blanch them rather than cooking them until they're mushy, and then add a squirt of lemon.

Lastly, anyone who says that they must really need iron because they're craving beef should realize that their body is experiencing the same kind of withdrawal as a smoker trying to quit smoking. You should not take a craving for meat too seriously, since it's no different than a craving for caffeine, sugar, alcohol, etc. Science continues to prove that red meat just has too much carcinogenic animal protein and artery-clogging saturated fat and cholesterol.

Furthermore, evidence shows that animal-based sources of iron may lead to unhealthy, elevated levels of iron stores because our bodies absorb iron at an unintelligent, set pace. Plant-based sources of iron, on the other hand, allow the body to absorb iron according to the body's varying and true need. Additionally, the presence of vitamin C that occurs in vegetation (not in animal products) works together in synergy with the iron it contains, which allows for this healthier, body-intelligent absorption.