Blood Test Today: ____________________________

My Goal: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health • Nutrition Services Branch
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DHHS #0011
Iron in our bodies...

Why do we need it?

Iron is a mineral that is found in all the cells in our bodies. It is an important part of red blood cells, which carry oxygen to all the parts in our bodies. Iron is needed to help our bodies fight infections and for brain cells to work well.

Eating foods high in iron may help...

- you have more energy
- you fight infections
- your children grow
- your children learn better
- your baby grow well when you are pregnant

Food Sources of Iron...

- Meat, especially beef
- Shrimp, fish
- Tofu
- Turkey, chicken
- Lima beans, sweet peas
- Liver
- Greens
- Pinto beans, lentils, chickpeas, baked beans
- Whole grain or enriched bread and pasta
- Pumpkin seeds, pistachios, peanuts
- Iron-fortified cereals, including hot cereals and grits

Caution: Keep iron pills, including prenatal vitamins and multivitamins, away from children.

Reading the food label...

% Daily Value...

- Look for the % Daily Value (%DV) on the Nutrition Facts label on food.
- Look for iron and the percentage next to it.
- A food is considered a good source of iron if the number is between 10% and 19%.
- If the number is more than 20%, then it is considered an excellent source of iron.

To increase iron...

- Combine foods high in iron with foods high in vitamin C. Foods that contain vitamin C, such as orange juice, citrus fruits, or tomato sauce, help your body use iron.
- Cook with a cast iron skillet or pan. This can add some iron to foods.
- Don’t drink coffee or tea with meals high in iron. They contain compounds called tannins, which make it hard for your body to use iron.
- Take your iron pills or prenatal vitamins with water or juice, not milk. Calcium can make it hard for your body to absorb iron.