Iron Absorption (How to Maximize)

Iron absorption is optimal when iron supplements are taken on an empty stomach and not with food. It has been proven that certain foods can greatly inhibit the absorption of iron by as much as 1/3 to ½ compared to that on an empty stomach. It is therefore recommended that you take the supplements either one hour before or two hours after mealtime with a glass of water or juice (citric juice preferred). However, if you are experiencing difficulties taking iron supplements on an empty stomach because of nausea, your doctor may recommend that you take your supplements with a plain piece of toast or some saltine crackers. Your physician may even recommend that you reduce the dosing (number of times you take the pills per day) of your iron supplement to try and relieve the nausea. It has always been preferred to take iron in the fasting state, even if the dose must be reduced to relieve the side effects.

Food products that interfere or inhibits iron absorption

Tea

Coffee

Soda Pop

Caffeine Products

Protein

Milk or Dairy Products

Eggs

Legumes (Peas and Beans)

Dietary Fiber (Bran, Lignin)

Certain vitamin supplements and medications can also greatly reduce or inhibit the absorption of iron. These include prenatal vitamins, antacids, anti-inflammatory agents, and some antibiotics (see below for a full listing). In order to insure optimal iron absorption it is suggested that you do not take iron supplements together with any vitamins of medications. This will also prevent the iron supplement from reducing the therapeutic effectiveness of your medication and/or vitamins. It is usually recommended that you separate taking your iron supplements from other medications or vitamins by at least 2 hours (before and after).

Vitamins and Medications that interfere or inhibits iron absorption

Antacids

Anti-inflammatory Agents

Chloramphenicol

Deferoxamine

Penicillamine

Tetracyclines

Sulfanamines

Randitine

Quinidine

Calcium

Phosphate

Copper

Magnesium

Cadmium

Cobalt

Manganese

Aluminum

If you have questions or are experiencing difficulties taking iron supplements, please contact your physician.