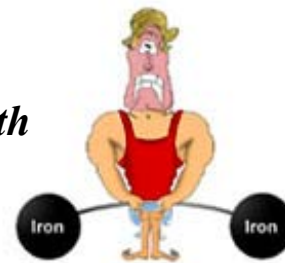


## ***Dietary Guidelines for Patients with Hemochromatosis***



### **What is hemochromatosis?**

Hemochromatosis is an inherited disorder of iron metabolism. People with hemochromatosis absorb more iron from their diet than people with normal iron metabolism and may develop toxic levels of iron buildup in the body if left untreated.

### **What causes hemochromatosis?**

The disorder is usually a genetic defect that manifests itself in midlife (around the ages 30 to 50 in men and over the age of 50 in women), but is also possible in rare juvenile or neonatal cases. Hereditary hemochromatosis is caused by a defect in the gene HFE, which helps regulate the amount of iron absorbed from food.

### **What problems can result from hemochromatosis?**

The excess iron is stored in certain organs, especially that of the liver, heart, and pancreas, and can cause damage to the organs and result in improper functioning.

### **What dietary guidelines are recommended for people with hemochromatosis?**

While hemochromatosis itself cannot be prevented, dietary precautions, along with regular treatments, can help prevent iron overload and organ damage. People with hemochromatosis should adhere to the following nutritional guidelines:

- **Reduce consumption of red meat.** – Red meat contains mostly heme iron, which is the most easily absorbed form of iron.
- **Include coffee and tea with your meals when possible.** - These beverages contain tannins, which inhibit the absorption of iron. In addition, consuming eggs, fiber, or supplemental calcium can impair the absorption of iron.
- **Avoid excessive consumption of sugary foods and beverages.** - Sugar increases iron absorption.
- **Avoid iron supplements and multivitamins that contain iron. If a supplement is needed, the following ones are iron free:** Nature's Way without iron, Centrum Silver, One A Day 50 Plus, One A Day Men's, One A Day Essential, Kroger One A Day Men, and Natrol without iron.
- **Avoid vitamin C supplements and try to drink vitamin C-rich juices between meals.** - Vitamin C increases the absorption of iron. Whole fruits and vegetables that contain vitamin C, however, are fine and should be encouraged.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation.** – Excessive alcohol intake, can cause further liver damage.
- **Avoid raw shellfish.** - Shellfish contain a bacterium *Vibrio vulnificus*, which can be fatal to people with high body iron levels. People with hemochromatosis are also more susceptible to blood stream infections.
- **Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, rice, and beans.** - They contain non-heme iron, which is more difficult to absorb than heme iron.

It is important to note that patients with hemochromatosis do not need to be extreme in their diet. Diet alone cannot treat hemochromatosis, but in addition to medical treatment, dietary precautions can help avoid the complications of iron overload.

For more information please visit:

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hemochromatosis/index.htm>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hemochromatosis/DS00455/>

<http://www.irondisorders.org>