

Iron: a mineral that is important in the production of hemoglobin, the protein that makes your blood red and is responsible for carrying oxygen through your body.

Anemia: a condition in which there is a shortage of iron, causing reduced hemoglobin production. As a result, less oxygen is carried through your body, making you feel tired or sluggish.

During pregnancy, it is difficult to consume enough iron in the diet to meet your increased iron needs and prevent anemia. In order to prevent anemia, your doctors are monitoring your blood levels. They may prescribe an iron supplement in addition to your prenatal vitamins. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your iron supplements.

Foods that Increase Iron Absorption

Vitamin C (in fruits, tomatoes, melons, and strawberries) and Heme Iron found in red meats, fish poultry increase iron absorption. Include these in your diet often.

Foods that Decrease Iron Absorption

Tea, coffee, milk, and egg yolks decrease iron absorption. Avoid consuming them at the same time as the iron supplement.

When to Take Supplements

It is better to take your iron supplement between meals and your prenatal vitamins with breakfast or before bed. If you experience nausea or abdominal discomfort from the iron supplement, take it before bed and take your prenatal vitamin in the morning with breakfast.

Remember to keep your iron supplement, prenatal vitamins, and all other medications away from children.

If you have other questions or concerns about anemia and iron supplements, please call your physician or your physician's nurse.