

Hemoglobin and Iron



**American
Red Cross**

What is hemoglobin?

Before each donation, the Red Cross checks your hemoglobin level to protect your health. This is done by pricking your finger for a small sample of blood. Hemoglobin is a protein in your blood that contains iron and gives blood its red color. Hemoglobin carries oxygen from your lungs to nourish all the tissues in your body.

Currently, female donors must have a hemoglobin level of at least 12.5 g/dL, and male donors must have a hemoglobin level of at least 13.0 g/dL. If your hemoglobin is too low, you will be asked to wait to donate blood until your levels increase. A low hemoglobin level may be normal for you or it could be a sign of another condition such as anemia. If you are concerned about your hemoglobin level, you should consult with your health-care provider.

What is iron?

Iron is an essential mineral found in our diet and is part of hemoglobin. You need iron to make new red blood cells to replace the ones lost in a blood donation. Low iron may cause anemia or make it worse.

What if I've been deferred for low hemoglobin?

If your hemoglobin was in the normal range but too low for donation, we encourage you to eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of food high in vitamin C and rich in iron. It is normal for hemoglobin levels to fluctuate, so we encourage you to schedule another appointment soon.

If your hemoglobin has been below the minimum level for donation on several occasions, we suggest that you discuss the results with your health-care provider. If you are a frequent donor, we recommend that you discuss with your health-care provider taking a multivitamin with iron or an iron-only supplement to replace the iron lost through blood and platelet donations.

For more information, please visit our website at redcrossblood.org/iron.

IRON BOOSTERS

HIGH-IRON FOODS

- Meat and eggs
- Seafood
- Vegetables
- Bread and cereal
- Fruit
- Beans

FOOD & DRUGS THAT CAN DECREASE IRON ABSORPTION

- Coffee or tea
- Chocolate
- High-fiber foods
- Some medications like antacids

View a full list at:
[redcrossblood.org/
iron-rich-foods](http://redcrossblood.org/iron-rich-foods)

Download the Blood Donor App | redcrossblood.org | 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)