Iron Deficiency (low iron levels) in Pregnancy

Pregnant women's iron levels often drop very low because growing babies require a lot of iron. Although a healthy diet and a prenatal vitamin is enough for many women, some require more.

Your physician recommends:

☐ **to increase the iron in your diet** (see other side)

☐ **to take an iron supplement** (physician or nurse will recommend one)

    ☐ ferrous sulfate 300mg once daily

    ☐ ferrous fumarate 300mg ___ times daily

    ☐ ferrous fumarate 300mg (2 tabs) at bedtime every other day

    ☐ other: _____

    ☐ Vitamin C 500mg (take with the iron supplement)

These can be purchased directly from a pharmacist without a prescription; kept behind the pharmacy counter. Vitamin C helps iron be absorbed so **take your iron along with 500mg of Vitamin C on an empty stomach, and never with any other medications or vitamins** (including your prenatal vitamin).

Do not purchase an iron supplement online or from a health food store. Although these types of supplements are often preferred by pregnant women because they cause less stomach upset, this is because they contain **much** less iron and aren't adequate to meet your needs.

Increasing iron in your diet:

Iron is present in small amounts in many different foods, but only a few foods have very high levels. To follow a "high iron diet", eat a **minimum of two of the following choices per day**:

-red meat (beef), ½ to 1 cup serving
-beans and legumes (soy products like tofu), ½ to 1 cup
 serving
-egg yolks, 2 per serving
-oatmeal or cream of wheat cereal, ⅔ to 1 cup serving
-fortified breakfast cereals*, 1 cup serving

*read the nutrition label and look for "contains **30%** daily recommended intake of iron". Traditional breakfast cereals like Cheerios, Shreddies, or Raisin Bran are most likely to have this.

Contrary to popular belief, spinach and other leafy green vegetables are not good dietary sources of iron because the type of iron they contain cannot be readily absorbed. If you are vegetarian, focus on beans and legumes, which are excellent iron sources.