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HEMOCHROMATOSIS

The requirement for iron is **8 mg** for men and post-menopausal women and **18 mg** for pre-menopausal women.

A typical diet contains **10-20 mg** of iron per day.

In a normal situation **1 – 2 mg** of iron is absorbed.

In hemochromatosis **3 – 6 mg** of iron is absorbed.

Normal body content of iron is **3 – 4 g**.

In advanced hemochromatosis the body iron accumulation may be **40 – 60 g**.

In hemochromatosis you gain an excess of approximately 1 g of iron per year.

The main treatment for hemochromatosis is therapeutic phlebotomy. Removal of one unit (2 cups) of blood results in the loss of **200 – 250 mg** of iron. Iron is found in every living cell in the body. A large portion is in the form of hemoglobin and myoglobin.

Hemoglobin

The iron-containing part of the red blood cell that carries oxygen to the cells and some carbon dioxide away from the cells. It is also responsible for the red colour of blood.

Myoglobin

Iron-containing compound that binds oxygen in muscle tissue.

Heme Iron

Iron provided from animal tissues in the forms of hemoglobin and myoglobin. Approximately 40% of the iron in meat is heme iron; it is readily absorbed.

Nonheme Iron

Iron provided from plant sources and animal tissues other than in the forms of hemoglobin and myoglobin. Nonheme iron is less efficiently absorbed than heme iron.