

Box 11-2

Factors that Affect Iron Absorption

Increase

Acidity (low pH): Administer iron between meals (gastric hydrochloric acid).

Ascorbic acid (vitamin C): Administer iron with juice, fruit, or multivitamin preparation.

Vitamin A

Tissue (cellular) need

Meat, fish, poultry

Cooking in cast iron pots

Decrease

Alkalinity (high pH): Avoid any antacid preparation.

Phosphates: Milk is unfavorable vehicle for iron administration.

Phytates—found in cereals

Oxalates—found in many fruits and vegetables (plums, currants, green beans, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes)

Tannins—found in tea, coffee

Tissue (cellular) saturation

Malabsorptive disorders

Disturbances that cause diarrhea or steatorrhea

Infection

Achieving a nutritionally adequate vegetarian diet is not difficult