**Spinach- a best vegan iron source**

Your body needs the mineral iron to carry oxygen throughout the body via your red blood cells. This process helps the cells produce energy to run all your bodily functions. You get heme iron from animal foods and nonheme iron from plant foods like spinach. Cooked spinach delivers significantly more iron than raw. But because nonheme iron doesn’t absorb as well as heme, you need to maximize the iron a serving of spinach provides.

**Iron Content of Spinach**

Women aged 51 and older and adult men of all ages need 8 milligrams of iron daily, while women from 19 to 50 require 18 milligrams. In their childbearing years, girls and women are particularly susceptible to iron deficiency because of their monthly periods.

Spinach is famously a good source of iron, but you’re better off eating it cooked. A half-cup of cooked spinach – the serving size for all cooked vegetables – supplies 3 milligrams of iron. That’s 38 percent of what men and older women need, and 17 percent of younger women’s requirements. Compare that to a cup of raw spinach – the serving for raw veggies – which offers just 1 milligram of iron. For men and older women, that’s a full 13 percent of what they need; but for younger women, it’s only 6 percent.

**Nonheme Iron Absorption**

Iron from spinach and other plant foods, however, is not as well-absorbed as iron from animal sources. If you follow a vegetarian diet, you're only absorbing about 5 to 12 percent of the iron you consume from food, says the National Institutes of Health.

A few dietary tricks can boost your iron absorption. If you eat animal foods, serving cooked spinach with a helping of meat or seafood improves the mineral’s bioavailability. Shellfish like oysters, clams and mussels are especially rich in iron. Vitamin C also assists with iron absorption, so sauté your spinach with foods containing a lot of vitamin C, like red bell peppers or tomatoes.

**Other Benefits of Spinach**

While cooked and raw spinach each offer an excellent mix of nutrients for health, the cooked vegetable stands out. A half-cup offers more than twice the protein and fiber of raw spinach, plus richer amounts of potassium, magnesium, B vitamins, and vitamins A and C. Incorporate both types of spinach into your meal plan as part of a healthy, balanced diet.