The Importance of Iron

Absorption of iron occurs within four hours of eating. Since our bodies sometimes need help maintaining a sufficient iron reserve, it is very important to add iron-rich foods to your diet to keep your iron level adequate for donation.

**Meat and Meat Substitutes**
- Lean red meats (beef, lamb, pork, veal)
- Organ meats (liver, gizzards)
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Seafood
- Nuts
- Beans

**Fruits and Vegetables**
- Dark green, leafy vegetables
- Beans (green, lima, peas)
- Root vegetables (beets, white potato)
- Cauliflower
- Sprouts (beans, alfalfa)
- Artichokes
- Dried fruit (dates, prunes, raisins)

**Breads and Cereals**
- Enriched, fortified and whole-grain breads
- Cereal
- Grains (oats, wheat, bran)
- Wild rice
- Macaroni

**Helpful Hints**

- Caffeine (coffee, tea and cola), high-fiber cellulose food (celery), and some antacid medications may decrease iron absorption.
- Dairy products will also decrease the absorption of iron.
- Increase iron absorption by including food and drinks high in vitamin C (fruit and fruit juice) along with the iron rich food.
- The best rule is to eat regular, nutritionally balanced meals, and drink plenty of fluids.