

# Total Nutrition

## Reduce Fatigue And Save A Life At The Same Time

by Mindy Hermann, RD

(NAPSA)—Helping others can be very gratifying, especially when you could potentially save a life. That's possible when you donate blood. I got the idea for this week's column when I learned



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that hospitals across the country are recommending iron-fortified cereal to their blood donors to keep their iron levels up. This is good advice for all of us.

### The Iron Link.

Iron is extremely important to everyone. Your bone marrow uses iron to make hemoglobin, a compound that carries oxygen in your red blood cells. Red blood cells bring oxygen to all cells in your body to enable them to "breathe." Without oxygen, your cells cannot function normally. People who don't have enough iron in their body may feel tired, have trouble breathing, and wear out quickly during exercise.

A shortage of iron, called iron deficiency anemia, can be diagnosed by a doctor. Your doctor may ask you about your diet and about any abnormal bleeding that would cause you to lose iron.

Certain groups of people need to pay special attention to iron. Blood donors lose iron in their donated blood. Women in their childbearing years require more iron than men do because they lose iron every month during menstruation, although everyone needs iron.

"Iron deficiency anemia is a big problem for kids and teens because they may not eat enough iron-rich foods, leaving them short on iron and possibly hurting their body and brain development,"

says Elizabeth Ward, R.D., author of *Healthy Food, Healthy Kids*. "Iron-fortified breakfast cereals like Total are a great way to fill in the iron gap. They are convenient, tasty, and relatively inexpensive for the nutrition they provide."

### When You Donate Blood.

Before you donate, a blood bank volunteer will take a small sample of blood and evaluate the health of your red blood cells. If you have too few red blood cells or they contain too little iron, you will not be permitted to donate. People who are rejected for this reason (there are several situations where a donor may be rejected) should eat plenty of iron-containing foods, and try again in a couple of months.

After donating, your body replaces the liquid part of your blood, the plasma, within a few hours, so be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Red blood cells require several weeks to come back to normal levels. A well-balanced diet that includes lean meat, green vegetables, beans, fruits and whole-grain bread can help. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City also recommends iron-rich breakfast cereal to people who donate blood. Total cereal has 100 percent of the DV for iron.

### Ask Mindy

**Q:** I don't eat a lot of red meat. Is it still okay for me to donate blood? *Shari, Katonah, New York*

**A:** Sure, just eat plenty of other foods high in iron. Enjoy foods rich in vitamin C, like orange juice and tomato sauce, with non-meat foods like fortified cereal and pasta. An interesting little-known fact is that vitamin C helps boost iron absorption.

(Questions for Mindy? E-mail her at [askmindy@totalcereal.com](mailto:askmindy@totalcereal.com))

### Iron Rich Food Sources

Food	U.S. Recommended Daily Value
Red meat, 3 oz. cooked	14%
Dark meat poultry, 3 oz. cooked	6%
Grain products (rice, pasta) 1/2 c cooked	4%
Green leafy vegetables, 1/2 c cooked	3%
Fortified breakfast cereal, like Total, 3/4 c	100%

