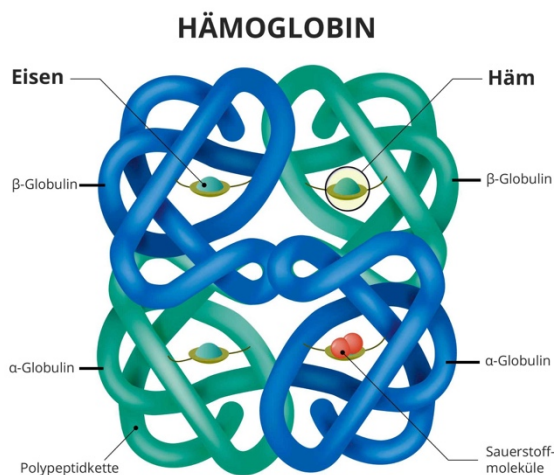


Iron

Dr. med. Heinz Lüscher

All-rounder

The trace element iron is an all-rounder, so it is not surprising that there are so many negative effects when there is a deficiency of iron in the body. Especially (young) women can tell you a thing or two about it, because the monthly blood loss increases the risk of a deficiency, but vegetarians and vegans can also be affected. During pregnancy, the need for iron is higher. Adolescents and sportsmen also have a higher need for iron.



Short Discourse

The protein haemoglobin (Hb), the most important component of erythrocytes (red blood cells), contains the trace element iron. Iron in turn binds to oxygen, which is then transported with the erythrocytes from the lungs to our body's cells. Iron therefore has a vital function; if there is sufficient iron in the blood, our organism is perfectly supplied with oxygen. Iron also contributes to the normal formation of erythrocytes and haemoglobin.

An iron deficiency is indicated by the following symptoms:

- Chronic fatigue
- Decrease in performance
- Concentration difficulties
- Insomnia
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Muscle tension in the neck
- Depressive moods
- Hair loss
- Brittle nails
- Restless Legs Syndrome
- Paleness
- Susceptibility for infections



What are the causes of iron deficiency?

As already mentioned, menstruation can lead to a deficiency, especially if it is very severe. Beyond this, unnoticed blood loss e.g. in the gastrointestinal tract or very frequent blood donations can also be a cause.



Often, however, a deficiency can also be traced to a poor diet. However, not only an inadequate diet can be responsible for this deficiency, but also the health of the intestinal system. If the intestinal flora is disturbed and the intestinal mucosa is inflamed, iron (and other vital substances) cannot be fully absorbed. In this case, the bowel would first have to be put in order by intestinal rehabilitation.

A lack of gastric acid can also lead to a lack of vital substances and iron, because only with sufficient gastric acid can the food be correctly broken down and the vitamins and minerals be absorbed further on in the intestine.

Finally, it should also be noted that many medications are literally iron robbers. The iron inhibitors among the medicines include Acetylsalicylic acid (e.g. aspirin), gastric acid blockers and cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Diagnosing an iron deficiency

In order to diagnose an iron deficiency, the serum ferritin (stored iron) should be measured in the blood. If this value is less than 30 µg/l in men and less than 15 µg/l in women, this is referred to as a storage iron deficiency. However, measuring the Hb value alone is not conclusive; it only decreases when the iron stores are depleted and for this reason not enough red blood cells can be formed. If the Hb value falls below the threshold value (women 12.0 g/dl, men 13.0 g/dl), iron deficiency anaemia ("anaemia") requiring therapy is present.



Absorption of iron

Iron is ingested through food. However, the absorption capacity is limited. Only about 5 - 15% of the iron consumed is actually absorbed, the rest is excreted without being absorbed.

If an iron deficiency is present or in order to prevent it, it is important to eat more foods that contain a high proportion of iron and to avoid or reduce foods that inhibit iron absorption. It is also advisable to consume foods that promote iron absorption. Iron is found mainly in meat (especially "red" meat) and offal, fish and seafood. The iron from meat can be more easily absorbed in the intestines than vegetable iron. A relatively high iron content among vegetable food sources can be found in legumes such as lentils, soybeans or chickpeas.

Coffee, tea, milk and cocoa, cola and red wine inhibit the absorption of iron and should

therefore be avoided if an iron deficiency exists. In addition, the absorption of iron is promoted by vitamin C -containing foods.

Iron preparations

In most cases, however, those affected by iron deficiency do not succeed in remedying the deficiency by diet alone and the usual iron preparations are often not well digested and they can lead to digestive problems. There are, however, also natural iron preparations, e.g. from the very ferrous curry leaf.



Iron preparations made from the curry leaf are highly concentrated and provide pure vegetable iron with very high bio-availability. Curry leaf iron is not only more readily absorbed than a conventional iron preparation, but is also much better tolerated.

Curry leaf should not be confused with the curry we know (spice mixture). The curry tree (*Bergera koenigii* or *Murraya koenigii*) is a plant species that belongs to the rhombic family and thrives in tropical and subtropical Asia. The leaves are mainly used in South Indian and Sri Lankan cuisine and are very popular in those countries. I can highly recommend a product which I developed using my own special recipe, which ensures the

highest possible bio-availability. Iron microencapsulated in lecithin (iron pyrophosphate) is combined with a considerable amount of 40% curry leaf extract and blended by means of special processing to a near-natural product. It also contains 7% acerola extract, which with its high vitamin C content promotes the absorption of iron.

