

# The UConn Buzz



## Iron-Deficiency Anemia

Anemia is a common blood condition that occurs when your body lacks enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen efficiently. This can lead to fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and shortness of breath.

According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention, 2.8 million people are diagnosed by primary care providers with anemia and 800,000 emergency room visits are for anemia. ([CDC](#)). Women are at higher risk for anemia than men. There are different kinds of anemia. The most common type is **iron-deficiency anemia**, which results from low iron levels due to poor diet, blood loss, or difficulty absorbing iron. Other types include vitamin B12 or folate deficiency anemia and anemia caused by chronic diseases.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of anemia are often develop gradually and may include:

- Extreme fatigue and weakness
- Pale skin
- Shortness of breath or dizziness
- Cold hands and feet
- Brittle nails and hair loss
- Headache
- Swollen tongue

### Iron-Deficiency Anemia

Iron is a vital mineral needed to produce hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen throughout the body. When iron levels are too low, the body produces fewer and smaller red blood cells, leading to iron-deficiency anemia.

### Causes of Iron-Deficiency Anemia

This condition can develop due to several factors, including:

- **Inadequate Dietary Intake:** Not consuming enough iron-rich foods, such as red meat, poultry, seafood, beans, lentils, and dark leafy greens
- **Blood Loss:** Heavy menstrual periods, gastrointestinal bleeding (such as ulcers or colon polyps), or frequent blood donations can cause iron depletion.
- **Poor Absorption:** Certain medical conditions, such as celiac disease or inflammatory bowel disease, can interfere with the body's ability to absorb iron. Gastric bypass surgery and some medications that reduce stomach acid may also affect absorption.

### Prevention and Treatment

To prevent iron-deficiency anemia, include iron-rich foods in

your diet. Good sources include:

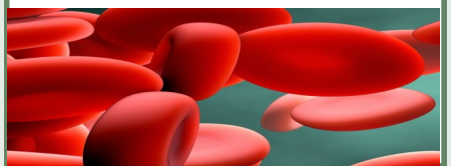
- **Heme Iron (from animal sources, more easily absorbed):** Red meat, poultry, and seafood.
- **Non-Heme Iron (from plant sources, requires vitamin C for better absorption):** Beans, lentils, tofu, spinach, fortified cereals, and nuts.

Pairing iron-rich foods with vitamin C sources like citrus fruits, bell peppers, and tomatoes can enhance absorption. If needed, a healthcare provider may recommend iron supplements, but these should only be taken under medical supervision, as excessive iron can be harmful.

### Screening

If you often feel unusually tired or weak, talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested for anemia. Early detection and proper management can improve your energy and overall health.

Sources: [Mayo Clinic](#), [Cleveland Clinic](#), [NIH](#)



## HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

**Veteran Community Coffee Break**, Every third Wednesday of the month at 7pm, Eastern CT Veterans Community Center, Willimantic, CT. Join "Out of the Abyss - Suicide Support and Recovery Group" This group welcomes anyone looking for connection, stress relief strategies and other techniques to manage suicidal urges. These groups are for any person ages 18 and older.

**Maple Festival**, March 29-30 10-4pm at EO Smith High School, Storrs, CT. MAPLE MADNESS and 100% wholesome family fun at the annual Eastern CT Maple Festival. There will be family activities, children's crafts & games, bouncy houses, and food trucks, lots of maple flavored treats, jams, bread, baked goods, cannoli, cotton candy, kettle corn, fried dough, knitted items, toys, handmade cutting boards, & much more!

**Penguin Plunge**, March 29, at 11 am Crandall Park, Tolland, CT. The Penguin Plunge is your chance to dive into icy waters and support over 12,000 athletes of all abilities who train and compete year-round with Special Olympics Connecticut. This unforgettable experience is open to everyone!

**The Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD)**, through funding from the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funds, is addressing uncontrolled high blood pressure, a risk factor for strokes and heart attacks. Hypertension (high blood pressure) can be controlled through lifestyle choices and some people will need medications prescribed by their doctor. EHHD is offering educational series throughout the district with a free at-home blood pressure monitor as part of the series. For more information go to the EHHD [Hot Topics page](#).

## Lentil and Collard Soup

4-6 servings

### Ingredients

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup dry red lentils
- 6 cups water (or 1/2 as stock)
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 bunch collard greens
- 1 T ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 T minced garlic
- 2 T lemon juice



**DIRECTIONS** 1. Rinse, stem, & thinly slice collards; rinse and drain lentils. 2. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, stir in onion & salt; cook until softened & translucent, about 4 minutes. Stir in lentils, & cook for 1 minute. Pour in water; bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat, cover; simmer until the lentils are tender, about 15 minutes. 3. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add collard greens, and cook until wilted, about 10 minutes. When the lentils are tender, stir in the collard greens and season with cumin, cinnamon, and garlic; simmer 10 – 20 minutes. Stir in lemon juice before serving.

## Connect: How Social Bonds Boost Your Health

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to get caught up in work, responsibilities, and digital distractions. But taking the time to nurture relationships isn't just good for the soul—it's vital for your health. Research shows that strong social connections can reduce stress, improve heart health, and even help you live longer.

Social bonds provide emotional support, helping us cope with life's challenges. Whether it's a close friend, a family group, having someone to talk

to can lower anxiety and promote overall well-being. According the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), people with strong social networks are less likely to suffer from depression and chronic illnesses, and have better quality of sleep. Whereas a lack of social connections has been shown to be a risk factor for increased heart disease and stroke ([HEART](#)).

Building connections doesn't have to be complicated. A simple phone call, joining a local club,

& even participating in workplace wellness activities can strengthen relationships and improve mental and physical health. So, take a moment today to check in with a friend, schedule a coffee date, or volunteer in your community. Strengthening your social bonds is something you can do to maintain and improve for your health!

Resources: [Mayo Clinic](#), [American Heart Association](#), [CDC](#)

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

