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IRON IN RED MEAT – FRIEND OR FOE

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**ABSTRACT** 

In developed countries, due to high content and bioavailability, red and processed

meats are the main sources of iron in the diet. Adequate intake of this nutrient is essential for

the proper development and functioning of the human body, and its deficiencies are

associated mainly with the occurrence of anemia, which is one of the most widespread

nutritional problems in the world. However, excessive intake of iron can be detrimental to

health. Studies have shown that high consumption of red meat and its products, and thereby

iron, particularly in the form of heme, increases the risk of non-communicable diseases,

including cancers, type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Due to the high nutritional

value, the presence of red meat in the diet is preferable, but according to World Cancer

Research Fund International its consumption should not exceed 500g per week. Furthermore,

there are several potential ways to suppress the toxic effects of heme iron in the diet.

**KEY WORDS:** red meat, iron, heme, cancers, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases

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