

How to Raise Your Ferritin

A simple starting point for tired women and women TTC whose “iron is fine”

A fertility & hormone practitioner's guide | @fertilitybyerika

Hello, I'm Erika

I'm a women's hormone health practitioner, fertility awareness instructor and reproductive biologist. Ferritin is one of the first things I check with any woman I work with and one of the most commonly dismissed.

This is a short taster: the essentials of what actually moves the number, in plain terms. It won't cover everything, but it'll give you real starting points.

If you still feel stuck after reading it, that's normal - and it's figureoutable. You can apply for a free *Root cause & Cycle Mapping Session* with me: 45 minutes to identify the 2–3 most likely root causes in *your* case, and map your next steps.

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1. Know your number - normal isn't optimal

Ferritin is your stored iron. Most labs call anything above 12–15 “normal,” but women routinely feel awful well above that line - exhausted, foggy, cold, losing hair, breathless on stairs. Normal is not the same as optimal.

Here's roughly where I'd rather see you sit:

Ferritin (ug/L)	What it usually means
70–150+	Strong reserves. Where I like active women and those trying to conceive to be.
50–70	The common “your labs are fine” zone but repair and energy are often running low. Women are not able to withstand major stress events.
30–49	Low. Hair shedding, low mood and fatigue are common here.
Under 30	Very low. Worth proper investigation and support.

These are general optimal-focused ranges, not a diagnosis - your full picture matters.

2. It's rarely just iron

Here's why taking an iron tablet often doesn't budge the number: raising ferritin isn't one thing. Your gut has to absorb the iron, the right cofactors have to move and store it, and your liver has to recycle and hold it. If any layer is off, the iron goes in and the ferritin stays flat. So we don't just add iron - we look at the whole system.

3. Absorb it first (the step most people skip)

You can eat all the iron in the world and barely absorb it if your stomach acid is low - which is incredibly common, especially with stress. Stomach acid is what makes iron absorbable in the first place. A simple start: digestive bitters or a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in a little water about 10 minutes before iron-rich meals, and supporting gut health (if no major dysbiosis or histamine issues are present) with fermented foods like sauerkraut, miso, sourdough, kombucha, kimchi or kefir. If standard iron tablets wreck your stomach, **lactoferrin** is a much gentler way to raise ferritin that's worth knowing about.

4. Eat the right iron and pair it well

There are two kinds of iron. **Heme iron** (from animal foods) absorbs easily on its own. **Non-heme iron** (from plants) needs help. The single most nutrient-dense food for rebuilding ferritin is liver - it gives you iron and copper together (more on copper below). If the taste puts you off, try desiccated liver supplements or organ protein powders.

Eat more iron	Pair it with (boosts absorption)	Keep apart (blocks it)
Liver, red meat, oysters, sardines (heme); lentils, chickpeas, pumpkin seeds, cooked spinach (non-heme)	Vitamin C at the same meal - squeeze lemon, capsicum, broccoli, or have kiwi/berries.	Tea, coffee, matcha and dairy (calcium) - keep these 1–2 hours away from iron-rich meals.

The most common mistake: tea or coffee with your meal or iron supplement. The tannins can block most of that meal's iron. Make your cup a mid-morning or mid-afternoon thing instead - not a mealtime one.

5. Iron needs its team (the cofactors)

Iron can't do its job alone.

Copper is the big one people miss - without enough of it, iron gets stuck and can't load into storage, so ferritin won't rise no matter how much iron you take (liver, oysters and dark chocolate are great sources).

Magnesium - dark leafy greens, seaweed, almonds, avocado, pumpkin seeds, flaxseeds, dark chocolate

Zinc - take zinc separately from iron, since they compete. This is exactly why a single iron pill so often isn't the answer. Zinc sources: shellfish, beef, oysters, red meats, sardines

6. Calm inflammation & support your liver

When your body is inflamed, it flips a switch that traps iron and keeps ferritin low even when there's enough iron coming in. This is why some women stay stuck despite doing “everything right.” The fixes are the same foundations

I work with clients on: steady blood sugar, good sleep, lower stress, gentle liver support and omega-3s. It's never just one thing but this is often the missing piece.

7. Test properly

Ferritin alone tells half the story. Ask for a full iron panel plus hs-CRP (an inflammation marker). Low ferritin with normal CRP points to true deficiency; low ferritin with high CRP means inflammation.. Knowing which you're dealing with saves months.

Want help putting it together?

This is the taster - the starting points. If your ferritin has stayed stubbornly low, or you're not sure which layer is yours, that's exactly what I help clients untangle. Book a free call and we'll look at your case and map your next steps. Either way, you'll leave with clarity.

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