



## Iron and Your Health

Iron is a mineral that is important for your child's growth. A diet with foods that are high in iron to meet daily needs is necessary for the development of strong muscles and the production of blood.

### **What is Iron-Deficiency Anemia?**

Every red blood cell in the body contains iron in its hemoglobin. The hemoglobin carries the oxygen to all parts of your body. When there is a lack of iron in the blood, it can lead to iron deficiency anemia.

Many children with iron deficiency anemia do not show any symptoms because the body's iron stores are depleted slowly. As the anemia progresses, some of these symptoms may be:

- Fatigue and weakness
- Pale skin
- Rapid heartbeat
- Irritability
- Decreased appetite
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

### **What causes iron deficiency anemia?**

Some of the factors may be:

- Not enough iron in the diet
- Poor absorption of iron by the body
- Ongoing blood loss
- Periods of rapid growth

## How much iron does my child need?

These are the recommended amounts of iron depending on your child's age:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Males (milligrams/day)</b>	<b>Females (milligrams/day)</b>
7-12 months	11	11
1-2 years	7	7
3-8 years	10	10
9-13 years	8	8
14-18 years	11	15

## Basic Recommendations to Prevent Iron Deficiency Anemia

1. Infants younger than 1 year should drink only breast milk or an infant formula supplemented with iron.
2. Children under 2 years of age should have no more than 24 ounces of cow's milk a day. Too much milk can interfere with the absorption of iron and also affect your child's appetite for iron-rich foods.
3. Iron-fortified cereals are a great way to get more iron.
4. Have a variety of foods in the diet.
5. Make sure children or teens on a vegetarian diet are getting enough iron.

## Tips for Adding Iron to the Diet

1. Iron from meat, fish, and poultry is better absorbed than iron from plants.
2. Include foods high in Vitamin C such as citrus juice and fruits, melons, dark green leafy vegetables, and potatoes with your meals. This may help your body absorb more iron.
3. Eat enriched or fortified grain products.
4. Some cereals contain a high amount of iron. Add them to your diet consistently.
5. Diet changes alone may not be enough to replenish depleted iron stores and your child may need to take an iron supplement if indicated by your doctor.

## Iron Rich Foods

- **MEATS:** Lean beef, lean pork, skinned poultry, shellfish, fish, liver, organ meats
- **EGG YOLKS**
- **DRIED BEANS OR PEAS:** Pinto, kidney, lima, navy, chick peas, black-eyed peas, lentils, split peas, green peas
- **GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES:** Spinach, kale, collards, beet greens, chard, broccoli
- **DRIED FRUITS:** Raisins, prunes, figs, dates, dried peaches, dried apricots
- **NUTS AND PEANUT BUTTER**
- **GRAINS:** Iron fortified cereals (read labels), enriched breads, whole grain breads

## Additional Information:

If you have questions, call: \_\_\_\_\_, Registered Dietitian

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