



Iron for Energy

Infants and Toddlers

Why is Iron Important?

- Iron helps carry oxygen in blood to all parts of the body.
- Iron comes from the food we eat. Enough iron in the blood will help your child have energy to walk, climb and run.
- Kids who do not eat enough iron can get anemia. A child who has a low level of iron may feel tired, cranky, look pale and not eat very much.
- Children who have low iron levels for a long time may have trouble learning.

What Causes Low Iron Levels?

The most common causes in young kids:

- drinking low iron formula.
- not eating enough food with iron.
- drinking too much milk (more than 24 ounces or 720 ml a day).

Your Doctor May Prescribe an Iron Supplement

To prevent the iron from staining your child's teeth:

- give your child a drink of water to rinse the mouth after the medicine is swallowed.
- clean teeth with a toothbrush or wet cloth.

Infants

- Breastfeed or feeding iron-fortified infant formula is enough for your baby until about 4-6 months.
- Around 4-6 months, introduce iron-rich foods like pureed meat, infant cereal with added iron, mashed beans or lentils.
- It is best for your baby to be breast-fed or stay on formula with added iron until 12 months of age. Breastfeeding can continue to 2 years of age and beyond.
- If your baby is eating iron-rich foods well at 9-12 months, whole milk may be started (but no more than 24 ounces or 720 ml a day).

Toddlers

- Offer no more than **24 ounces** (720 ml) of whole milk each day.
- Offer no more than **4 ounces** (120 ml) of juice each day.
- If your toddler is still thirsty, give water. Your child should start to be more hungry for iron-rich foods.
- Your toddler does not need other drinks like iced tea, soft drinks or sports drinks.

Next Review: July 2025



Offer at least one iron-rich food at each meal.

Animal sources are highest in iron:

- Beef, hamburger, veal, lamb, pork.
- Game meats and country foods: caribou, elk, moose, rabbit, deer, seal.
- Shellfish-clams, oysters and mussels.
- Fish-Jackfish, pickerel, salmon, sardines, tuna, whitefish, trout, mackerel.
- Eggs.
- Turkey, chicken, duck and goose.
- Organ meat – heart, kidney, liver, tongue.

Plant and grain sources:

- Iron from plant foods is not well absorbed. Vegetarians need almost double the amount of iron than non-vegetarians.
- Chickpeas, hummus, lentils, dahl.
- Beans-Kidney, white, black.
- Tofu, edamame beans.
- Nut butters (spread thinly) – Peanut, almond, cashew, soy, hazelnut, pistachio.
- Seed butters (spread thinly) – Sesame, pumpkin, sunflower.
- Cooked spinach.
- Quinoa.
- Blackstrap molasses mixed into hot cereal or baking.
- Iron-fortified infant cereals and breakfast cereals.

It is important to grind nuts and seeds for children under 4 years to prevent choking

Add Vitamin C-rich foods to meals

- Vitamin C helps absorb iron.
- Good sources of vitamin C: Berries, kiwi, oranges, tomatoes, grapefruits, honey dew, green or red peppers, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, green peas.

Picky Eaters

Picky eating can make mealtime rough. As a parent, you decide which foods to serve and when and where to serve them. Your child decides if and how much to eat.

Tips for feeding picky eaters:

- Offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks at regular times. Avoid long meal times, 30 minutes is usually enough time for a child to finish.
- Eat together as much as possible. Keep mealtimes pleasant and relaxed. Seat your child comfortably for meals and snacks.
- Do not let your child fill up on drinks. Offer only water between meals. Even a little milk and juice can spoil your child's appetite.
- Encourage your child to feed themselves. They may get messy! This is normal and helps toddlers develop interest in foods and good feeding skills.
- Avoid TV, phone, tablets during meals.
- Avoid pressure, praise, rewards, bribes, tricks or punishments for eating.
- Serve a variety of foods.
Offer at least 1 iron-rich food per meal.
- Expect it to take 15 or more tastes before your child will like a new food.
- Don't make separate meals for your child. The whole family should eat the same foods. Try to serve a familiar food your child likes to eat with new foods.



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