

Iron deficiency anaemia in children

It is important that toddlers get enough iron in their diet to prevent them from becoming anaemic. When toddlers are anaemic, the blood is unable to supply all the oxygen that the body needs.

Symptoms and signs of anaemia include: looking pale, being tired all the time, irritable behaviour and suffering from a lot of infections. Anaemia can also slow down your child's mental development.

Sources of Iron

- Foods from animals are the best source of iron, such as red meat (beef, lamb, pork), dark poultry meat (chicken legs and thighs), meat products, shellfish and oily fish. Liver is a good source of iron but should be limited to once per week because it contains high amounts of vitamin A
- If your child does not eat meat you should include plenty of oily fish, cereal foods, lentils, dhal, chickpeas, hummus and other pulses along with green leafy vegetables and fruit in the diet
- Vitamin C in fruit or fruit juice (but not fizzy drinks or diluted squash) helps the body to absorb iron from cereal and vegetable foods
- Do not let your child drink tea with meals because this reduces the absorption of iron from foods
- Cow's milk is low in iron. Too much milk every day can prevent you from eating a balanced diet so you may not get enough iron.
- Follow-on milks and growing up milks are fortified with iron. These can be used in place of cow's milk if you are worried that your toddler does not eat enough iron-rich foods.

Dietary Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) of children for iron

Age	RNI mg/day
0-3 months	1.7
4-6 months	4.3
7-12 months	7.8
1-3 years	6.9
4-6 years	6.1
7-10 years	8.7
11-18 years (male)	11.3
11-18 years (female)	14.8

Good sources of Iron Try to eat 1-2 portions of these every day.		Good non –meat sources of Iron Try to eat 2 portions of these a day, and more if you are vegetarian. These are absorbed better when eaten with foods rich in Vitamin C	
Food item	Iron content per 100g	Food item	Iron content per 100g
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mince beef • Lamb joint • Pork fillets • Ham • Tongue • Corned beef • Sardines • Mackerel • Liver pate (limit to 1 portion per week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.7mg • 2.3mg • 1.4mg • 0.7mg • 2.6mg • 2.4mg • 1.7mg • 1.2mg • 5.9mg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal bread • Dried apricots • Fortified breakfast cereals <p>Pulse/vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad beans • Red lentils • Chick peas • Baked beans • Eggs • Peanut butter <p>Green leafy vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broccoli • Red cabbage • Boiled spinach • Raw spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.4mg • 4.1mg • Check the label and choose one with at least 8mg per 100g • 5.5mg • 2.4mg • 2.1mg • 1.4mg • 1.9mg • 2.1mg • 1.0mg • 0.3mg • 0.5mg • 2.1mg

Meal suggestions

Breakfast	Breakfast cereals fortified with iron with milk and strawberries or half a glass of diluted orange juice
	Egg on wholemeal toast with a glass of diluted pineapple juice
Light meals	Liver pate in a sandwich or toast
	Ham or other cold red meat sandwich
	Lean bacon sandwich
	Fish or meat paste sandwich
	Taramasalata and pitta bread with citrus fruit segments
	Peanut butter sandwich and cherry tomatoes
	Hummus with breadsticks and slices of kiwi fruit
	Baked beans on toast with slices of red peppers
Onion bhajis with chapatti	
Main meals	Any meals with red meat or dark poultry meat
	Salmon and potato fish cakes with sautéed cabbage
	Dhal and chapatti with a slice of mango
	Stir fried tofu with spinach and sweet potato mash
Puddings	Any puddings with dried fruit along with segments of citrus fruit, eg an orange or satsuma
	Dried fruit salad with orange juice
	Dried apricots with chocolate buttons
	Banana slices and sultanas
Snacks	Hummus dip with raw vegetable sticks
	Slice of fruit cake or dark ginger cake with a glass of diluted orange juice
	Digestive biscuit with a handful of strawberries
	Slice of malt bread with a glass of diluted pineapple juice
	Drinking chocolate made with follow-on or growing up milk