

Iron Deficiency in Infants and Young Children

Iron deficiency can lead to problems with growth and development in young children. Learn how to prevent iron deficiency in your child!

What is Iron?

- Iron is a mineral that is found in many foods including meat, beans, and vegetables.
- The body uses iron to make **hemoglobin**, an important part of red blood cells.
- **Hemoglobin** carries oxygen to cells around the body.

What is Anemia?

- **Anemia** is a condition when the body's hemoglobin level is too low.
- There are many different causes of anemia in children, but the most common cause is iron deficiency. This is called **iron-deficiency anemia**.
- Children with **iron-deficiency anemia** can have low energy, pale skin, poor sleep, and irritability.
- **Iron-deficiency anemia** can negatively affect brain development.

Why are Young Children at Risk for Iron-Deficiency Anemia?

- During pregnancy, iron is transferred from the mother to the baby through the placenta.
- Babies are usually born with enough iron in their body to prevent iron deficiency for many months. Eventually, though, the infant will need to get iron through the diet.
- Breast milk contains only a small amount of iron.
- Many baby and toddler foods are also low in iron.

How Can I Prevent Iron Deficiency in My Child?

- Cow’s milk is a poor source of iron and can actually prevent the body from absorbing iron from other foods.
 - Do not feed your child cow’s milk before age 1.
 - After age 1, do not let your child drink more than 24 ounces of milk daily.
- Include iron rich foods in your child’s diet.
 - Between the ages of 4 and 6 months, start feeding your baby iron-fortified cereals at least twice daily.
 - As your child grows, continue to incorporate iron rich foods every day.
- Vitamin C helps the body to better absorb dietary iron. Offer your child vitamin C rich foods along with iron containing foods.
- Ask your doctor if your child should have a blood test to check for anemia
 - If your child has iron-deficiency anemia, your doctor may recommend a daily iron supplement.

| Foods Containing Iron | | Foods Containing Vitamin C |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Beef and Pork | Iron Fortified Cereals | Citrus Fruits |
| Poultry | Iron-Fortified Pasta | Tomatoes |
| Seafood | Dried Fruit | Strawberries |
| Beans and Peas | <i>Raisin, Apricot, Prune</i> | Broccoli |
| Egg Yolk | Dark Leafy Greens | |
| | <i>Spinach, Broccoli, Kale</i> | |

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Author: Aviva Alpert, MD
 Reviewers: Lauren Helms, MD

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