

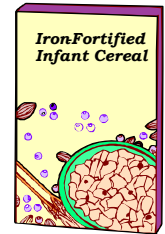
# Iron for Babies and Toddlers

## Why is iron important?

- Iron is important for your child’s growth and brain development
- Low iron (iron deficiency anemia) may cause learning problems later in life

## How can you help your child get enough iron?

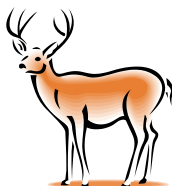
- Breastfeed as long as possible; the iron in breastmilk is well-absorbed
- If formula feeding, offer iron-fortified infant formula
- At age 6 months, introduce high-iron solid foods such as:
  - Well-cooked, finely-minced meat, poultry or fish
  - Iron-fortified infant cereal
  - Mashed cooked egg
  - Mashed lentils, beans or tofu
  - Above foods can be mixed with breastmilk, formula or water
- Offer high-iron foods with every meal or at least 2 to 3 times each day
- If your family is vegetarian, talk with a dietitian about getting enough iron (see More Information section on next page)



## High-iron foods

### Excellent sources

- Beef
- Pork
- Lamb
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Veal
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Deer, elk
- Venison



### Good sources

- Well-cooked eggs
- Fortified infant cereal
- Other fortified cereals such as rice krisp cereal
- Lentils, split peas
- Tofu, Hummus
- Beans like soy beans, kidney beans, chick peas
- Whole grain and enriched cereals, breads and pasta
- Dried apricots, prunes, raisins (chopped)
- Dark green vegetables (like peas, chopped spinach)



## Offer high-iron foods to your child every day

- Include high-iron foods with every meal or at least 2 to 3 times a day
- Suggested amounts by age 9 months (on average):
  - Well-cooked meat, fish, shellfish, chicken, turkey, egg, lentils, beans, and/or tofu – about 6 to 8 tablespoons per day
  - Iron-fortified infant cereal - about 8 tablespoons per day
- The above amounts are suggestions only - let your child decide how much to eat
- Remember, your child will eat better when you sit down and eat with him!

## How to include infant cereal if your child loses interest

- Make the cereal lumpier and thicker (add less liquid)
- Add the cereal to other foods such as:
  - Mashed vegetables or fruit
  - Mashed beans like chick peas
  - Lentils, hummus
  - Mashed potatoes
  - In cooking, such as soups or stews (a good thickening agent too!)
  - In baking, such as muffins, loaves, cookies or pancakes



## More ideas to boost iron

- Include meat, fish or poultry with meals or snacks – small amounts of these foods will boost iron absorption from non-meat foods
- Include the juices from well-cooked roasts in foods
- Include blackstrap molasses in cooking or baking (such as in muffins)
- Cook in cast iron or stainless steel pots
- Include foods with vitamin C to boost iron absorption from non-meat foods



## Offer foods with vitamin C to boost iron absorption, such as

- Broccoli, cauliflower, peas
- Potatoes with skin
- Tomatoes, tomato sauce
- Watermelon, kiwi fruit
- Oranges, grapefruit
- Blueberries, strawberries



## More information

- Iron and Your Health  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/nutrients/iron-and-your-health>
- Iron in Foods  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/food-and-nutrition/nutrients/iron-foods>
- Baby's First Foods  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/babys-first-foods>
- Call your local health unit or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak with a dietitian