



March 2006

IRON

Iron is an important mineral found in blood which is responsible for carrying oxygen around the body. Iron deficiency anaemia is the term used to describe where the blood cannot carry enough oxygen because iron levels are too low.

Where do we get Iron from?

Iron comes from certain foods that we eat. To improve blood iron levels you should eat a variety of foods which contain iron every day.

Best Sources - Haem Iron

The iron contained in these foods *is well absorbed* by the body.

- Meats eg. beef, lamb, pork
- Poultry eg. chicken, turkey
- Fish and shellfish.
- Offal eg. liver and kidney (pate is not recommended for children under 1 year)

Good Sources - Non Haem Iron

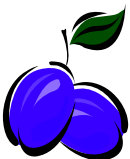
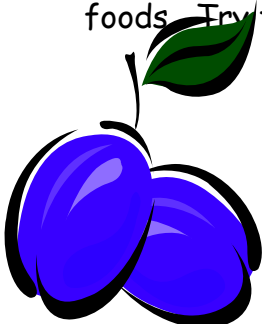
The iron in these foods is not as well absorbed by the body as the Haem Iron sources listed above.

- Wholegrain cereals, eg bread and breakfast cereals
- Breakfast cereals (fortified)
- Baked beans, dried peas, beans, lentils.
- Green leafy vegetables eg. spinach, broccoli
- Dried fruit eg. sultanas, apricots, dates, prunes
- Eggs
- Peanut butter
- Nuts (*whole nuts are not recommended for children under the age of 5*)

Vitamin C containing foods

Foods containing Vitamin C improve the iron absorption from other foods. Try to include foods from the list below at the same meal:

- Citrus fruits eg. oranges
- Berry fruits eg. strawberry
- Raw capsicum, broccoli, cabbage.



Guidelines to Reduce the Risk of Developing Iron Deficiency

1. Breast feeding or an iron containing formula is recommended for children under the age of one as the main source of milk.
2. Introduce solids at an appropriate age, eg: iron fortified cereal at around 6 months and meat/poultry at around 7-8 months.
3. Cows milk can be introduced as the main drink from 12 months. Avoid giving too much cow's milk (no more than 600ml/d) as it is a poor source of iron and can reduce your child's appetite for other foods.
4. Include iron containing foods in the diet every day, particularly from the "best source" list.
5. Try and include Vitamin C rich foods when eating foods from the "good source" list.
6. Encourage a wide variety of foods.

Try some of these ideas to boost your child's iron intake.

1. Choose a breakfast cereal with added iron eg. baby rice cereal or Weetbix.
2. Spread peanut butter (smooth), pate or fish paste on toast or plain biscuits.
3. Add Milo or Ovaltine (both contain iron) to milk drinks.
4. Thicken homemade soups with dried peas, beans or lentils.
5. Use wholemeal breads rather than white breads.
6. Try some dried fruit or nuts at snack times.
7. Consider baked beans on wholemeal toast with a glass of unsweetened orange juice.
8. Offer cold meats such as ham or chicken at snack times.
9. Include a food from the "best source" list in one meal each day.
10. Continue to give your child iron supplements if they have been prescribed.

