

Iron and Your Child

Iron is an important mineral for your child. Without iron the body cannot make enough red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of the body so it can work well. The brain also needs iron to work properly.

Formula-fed babies usually get enough iron from their formula. Breastfed babies usually need to take iron drops starting at about four months old, because breast milk doesn't contain much iron. Your baby's healthcare provider will tell you how much iron your baby needs. Once babies stop drinking formula or taking iron drops, they need to get their iron from the foods they eat. Not all foods contain iron. You can make sure your child gets enough iron by providing them with foods that contain iron (see below).

Common Iron-containing Foods		
Cereals and Grains	Meats/Eggs/Tofu	Fruits and Vegetables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron-fortified infant cereals • Iron-fortified breakfast cereals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose cereals that contain at least 3 mg of iron per serving. Examples of these cereals are <i>Cheerios</i>, <i>Life</i>, and <i>Mini Wheats</i> • Oatmeal • <i>Cream of Wheat</i> • Sunflower seeds • Pumpkin seeds • Fortified bread • Enriched rice • Enriched spaghetti or whole wheat spaghetti or macaroni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef • Chicken • Turkey • Lamb • Seafood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tuna - Crab - Halibut - Shrimp - Clams - Oysters - Salmon • Eggs • Tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickpeas • Artichokes • Beet greens • Potatoes • Peas • Spinach • Kale • Barley • Lentils • Beans such as navy, kidney, pinto beans • Figs • Dried peaches • Dried apricots • Raisins • Prune juice

Combining iron-containing foods with foods that have vitamin C (also called ascorbic acid) will help your child absorb the iron better. Examples of foods with vitamin C that can be eaten with iron-containing foods are listed in the table below.

Foods that Contain Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)	
Cantaloupe Citrus fruits or citrus juices such as oranges, tangerines, grapefruit Fruit juices with added vitamin C Guava Kiwi Mango Papaya Pineapple Raspberries Strawberries	Broccoli Brussel sprouts Cabbage Cauliflower Green, red, or yellow bell peppers Kale Potatoes Sweet potatoes Tomatoes Tomato or vegetable juice Leafy green vegetables

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