

Advice for increasing iron rich foods in your child's diet

Dietetics & Nutrition

Information for Patients

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Why do children and young people need iron?

Iron is an important mineral. It is needed to make haemoglobin. This is the red pigment in blood. It carries oxygen around the body, delivering it to tissues and organs.

Children and young people need to eat enough iron in their diet to grow properly. A lack of iron can cause children to become:

- pale
- tired
- irritable
- lacking in energy
- loss of appetite
- grow slower than normal

This leaflet gives you ideas on foods to include in your child's diet to help ensure enough iron is taken each day.

Which foods are good sources of iron?

Iron is found in a wide range of foods. The best sources of iron are red meat and some fish. This type of iron is called **haem iron** and is more easily absorbed by the body.

If your child does not eat meat or fish then sources of iron can be found in many other foods (see table on p2).

This is known as **non-haem** iron but is not as easily absorbed by the body.



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How much iron do children and young people need?

Children and young people need different amounts of iron at various ages and stages in their growth, see below as a guideline:

Age	Amount of iron needed daily (milligrams)	Iron points needed daily (1 point=1milligram)
7 to 12 months	7.8	8
1 to 3 years	6.9	7
4 to 6 years	6.1	6
7 to 10 years	8.7	9
11 to 18 years (male)	11.3	11
11 to 18 years (female)	14.8	15

(Government dietary recommendations from the Dept. of Health, Public Health England 2016)

The following tables will help you add up the amount of iron your child/young person is getting from food:

Food	Portion size	Iron points
Meat, fish and eggs		
Cooked lamb	60 g / 2 oz	1 ½
Minced beef	60 g / 2 oz	1 ½
Roast pork	60 g / 2 oz	¾
Roast chicken	60 g / 2 oz	¼
Sausage	one small sausage = 20 g	¼
Beef burger	60 g / 2 oz / one burger	1 ½
Corned beef	25 g / 1 oz	½
Tuna in spring water	25 g / 1 oz	½
Sardines, in tomato sauce, (take care with bones)	50 g / 2 oz / 2 sardines = 50 g	1 ¼
Fish fingers grilled	2 fish fingers = 40 g	½
Egg, boiled	1 egg = 60 g	1

Many plant-based foods such as beans, vegetables and grains contain some iron.

Vegetarian foods	Portion size grams / oz / handy measure	Iron points Rounded to nearest 1/4
Bean burger	100 g / 4 oz / one burger	2 ½
Vegetable chilli	150 g / 6 oz / small portion	1 ¼
Vegetarian sausage	2 sausages (100 g)	3
Vegeburger	1 burgers (50 g)	2 ¼
Tofu (steamed)	2 tbsp	1
Soya mince	50 g / 2 oz dry weight	1 dry weight
Mixed vegetable curry	180 g / 7 oz / small portion	3
Quorn	50 g / 2 oz	¼

Vegetables	Portion Sizes grams / oz / handy measure	Iron Points Rounded to nearest 1/4
Baked beans	50 g / 2 oz / 1 tbsp	¾
Cooked red kidney beans	50g / 2 oz / 1 tbsp	1 ¼
Lentils, cooked	50 g / 2 oz / 1 tbsp	1 ¼
Tofu steamed	2 tbsp	1 ¾
Peas	50 g / 2 oz / 2 tbsp	¾
Broccoli	50 g / 2 oz / 1 tbsp	½
Sweet corn (canned)	50 g / 2 oz / 2 tbsp	¼
Spinach	50 g / 2 oz / 3 tbsp	¾
Cereal Foods		
Wholemeal bread	1 slice = 30 g	¾
White bread	1 slice = 25 g	1
Quinoa (raw)	50 g / 2 oz / 2 tbsp	3
Couscous (raw)	50 g / 2 oz / 2 tbsp	1
Chapattis	1 = 45 g	1
Fortified (added iron) tinned pasta shapes	50 g / 2 oz / 2 tbsp	½
Breakfast cereals		
Weetabix	1 biscuit = 18.75 g wt	2
Cornflakes/Rice Krispies	30 g / 1 oz / medium bowl	¾
Special K	20 g / ¾ oz	2
Ready Brek	25 g / 1 oz (dry weight)	3
Shreddies	30 g / 1 oz	2 ½

Note – whole nuts should not be given to children until the age of 5 years. This is due to the risk of

choking. Finely ground nuts (for example, smooth peanut butter or other nut butters) can be used from 6 months of age.

Fruits and nuts	Portion size grams / oz / handy measure	Iron points Rounded to nearest 1/4
Dried mixed fruit	25 g / 1 oz / 1 tbsp	1/2
Raisins	25 g / 1 oz / 1 tbsp	1
Dates (dried)	4 = 50 g	1/2
Apricots (dried)	6 dried = 40 g	1 1/2
Peanuts*	50 g / 2 oz / small bag	1
Peanut butter (smooth)	30 g / 1 tbsp	3/4
Nuts and raisins*	50 g / 2 oz / small bag	1 1/2
Sesame seeds	1 tbsp (9 g)	1

South Asian food

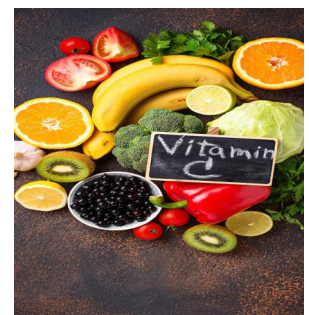
The following dishes are good sources of iron:

- Lamb or meat kheema
- Sag (with vegetables or meat)
- Urad dahl
- Black gram curry
- Chickpea dahl
- Masoor (red lentil) dahl



Top tips:

- Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) can help non-haem iron be absorbed.
- Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamin C such as oranges/ orange juice, kiwi, blueberries, raspberries, tomatoes, green peppers, broccoli etc.
- Fruit juice - limit to 1 glass a day only.
- Do not offer your child tea to drink with meals or snacks. It reduces iron absorption in the body
- Eating a variety of foods will help children and young people get enough iron in their diet.



Meal and snack ideas rich in iron

Breakfast ideas

- Fortified breakfast cereal with a glass of fruit juice
- Baked beans on wholemeal or granary toast
- Boiled egg/scrambled egg with wholemeal bread fingers followed with a piece of fruit

Light meal ideas

- Sardines / pilchards / egg on toast with tomatoes
- Baked potato with chilli beef/vegetarian chilli or beans
- Egg/peanut butter/tuna or cold meat sandwich
- Baked beans on toast and slices of red pepper
- Hummus with pitta bread and carrot sticks

Main meal ideas

- Vegetable and bean or lentil curry
- Roast lamb, beef or nut roast with green leafy vegetables and potatoes.
- Shepherds pie (can make with vegetarian mince)
- Ham, tomato and cheese omelette
- Beef and vegetable stir fry with rice
- Fish (salmon/tuna) with vegetables and potatoes/rice

Snack and dessert ideas:

- Fruit based pudding, for example fruit crumble
- Milk pudding with dried fruit
- Fruit cake or malt loaf
- Sliced well cooked egg
- Hummus with sliced pepper/cucumber

Examples of other foods and drinks fortified with iron:

Arlo Big Milk	1.2mg per 100ml
Kellogg Nutri-grain bars	2.4mg per bar
Innocent Immunity smoothies	3.5mg per drink
Belvita Soft Bakes	2.2mg per bar
Belvita Fruit Crunch bars	3.9mg per 2x biscuits
Kingsmill Vitamin boost 50/50 bread	2.1mg per slice
Jordans Super Nutty Granola	1.3mg per 50g
Alpro Soya growing up milk	2.1mg per 100ml

Contact details:

Nutrition and Dietetic Service

Telephone: 0116 258 5400

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