



Cardiff & Vale

**Nutrition** and **Dietetics**

**Maetheg** a **Dieteteg**

Caerdydd a'r Fro

# Iron Advice for Children

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# IRON: Advice for children

## Role of iron in our Bodies

Iron is needed for your child's growth and development and helps keep red blood cells healthy. Red blood cells carry oxygen around the body.



## Iron deficiency anaemia

Iron deficiency anaemia, also known as anaemia, is a common condition amongst toddlers and young children. Some children may have no symptoms, whereas others may appear irritable, tired, pale and lose their appetite.

It is very important that babies and young children get enough iron from their diet to help them grow and develop to their full potential.



## Preventing iron deficiency anaemia

An important way to prevent and treat anaemia is to make sure there is plenty of iron in your child's diet and avoid or limit things that reduce iron absorption.

- Offer your child plenty of iron-rich foods every day
- Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron from food and is found mainly in fruits and vegetables such as peppers, oranges, berries, tomatoes and pure orange juice\* (see below); try to include these with meals
- Avoid giving young children tea or coffee, these reduce iron absorption
- Offer a mixture of wholemeal and white products. Too much fibre can reduce iron absorption and can be too filling for babies and young children
- Offer orange juice\* diluted with water, from a cup and only at mealtimes

## Milk and iron

For most babies, breast milk or infant formula will provide all the iron they need for the first 6 months of life. The iron found in breast milk is well absorbed by the body and infant formula have iron added.

**At around 6 months, additional iron from food is needed.**

Cows' milk is low in iron so is unsuitable as a main drink for your baby before they are 12 months old, but can be used in their food; continue to give them breast milk or infant formula to drink. When they are 1 they can drink cow's milk but make sure they don't '**fill up**' on milk as this could reduce their appetite and intake of iron-rich foods.

## Rich dietary sources of iron

Iron is found in both animal and plant foods and a varied diet will help ensure your child gets enough. Our bodies are able to absorb the iron found in meat and fish best.

**The following foods are all good sources of iron:**

**Red Meat** - is the best source of iron e.g. beef, lamb, pork, liver, kidney, corned beef



**Oily Fish** - e.g. sardines, pilchards, salmon, mackerel (canned or fresh)



**Eggs** - poached, boiled and scrambled



**Peas, Beans and Pulses** - e.g. baked beans, butter beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, dhal, hummus



**Dark green leafy vegetables** - e.g. kale, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, rocket and spring greens



**Breakfast cereals** - look out for those that are 'fortified with iron' (own brand or branded). Examples include corn flakes, bran-flakes, wheat bisks, rice snaps and smooth oats.

*Those low in sugar & salt are best.*

**Dried fruit** - apricots, prunes, raisins, currants, sultanas, figs, dates (Offer with meals rather than as snacks)



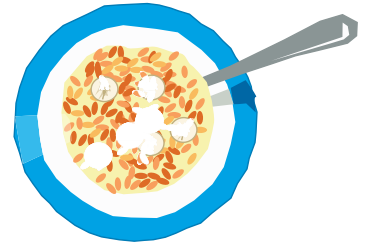
**Smooth Nut Butters & Ground nuts/seeds** - e.g. peanut butter and other nut butters, ground almonds, ground nuts and seeds



## Iron rich meal and snack ideas

### Breakfast

- Iron fortified breakfast cereal with slices of fruit, glass of orange juice diluted with water and given from a cup
- Eggly bread and pieces of tomato
- Smooth peanut butter on toast with slices of banana



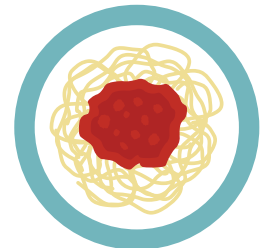
### Light meals

- Small jacket potato with baked beans, served with orange segments
- Mackerel in tomato sauce on toast served with chopped tomato
- Thinly sliced beef or corned beef sandwich with slices of cucumber and tomato
- Pitta filled with tuna and salad
- Scrambled egg on toast with grilled mushrooms
- Mashed sardines with toast fingers followed by tinned peaches
- Hummus with bread and cucumber slices
- Lentil or mixed bean soup and bread or a bread roll



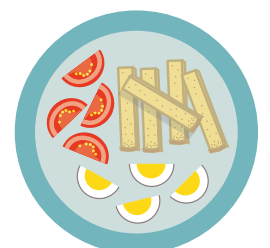
### Main meals

- Beef/lamb/pork casserole with potatoes and green vegetables
- Spinach and chickpea curry with rice, followed by fruit and yoghurt
- Spaghetti Bolognese or lasagne and salad
- Chilli con carne and rice
- Salmon pasta (tinned or poached salmon, cream cheese and cooked mushroom mixed with pasta) served with salad
- Roast dinner with potatoes and green vegetables
- Minced beef cottage pie or minced lamb Shepherd's pie with broccoli and peas
- Mixed bean and vegetable casserole with mashed potato followed by tinned fruit (in natural juice)
- Dhal served with rice and green vegetables



### Snacks

- Boiled egg cut into quarters and tomatoes
- Hummus with breadsticks and cucumber slices
- Half a bagel topped with peanut butter and slices of strawberries



## Are iron supplements needed?

Your doctor will advise you if your child needs to take iron supplements. If a supplement is necessary, it is important to continue giving it for as long as your doctor recommends.

The Department of Health recommends that all children aged 6 months to 5 years are given vitamin supplements containing vitamins A, C and D every day (unless they are having at least 500ml of formula per day).

Babies who are breastfed should take a vitamin D supplement from birth.

Ask your Health Visitor about Healthy Start vitamins, which you could be eligible for [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



For more information about feeding your child, speak to your health visitor or community nursery nurse.

For tips, recipes and meal ideas visit:

**[www.keepingmewell.co.uk](http://www.keepingmewell.co.uk)**  
**[www.nutritionskillsforlife.com](http://www.nutritionskillsforlife.com)**  
**[www.everychildwales.co.uk](http://www.everychildwales.co.uk)**  
**[www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)**  
**[www.firststepsnutrition.org](http://www.firststepsnutrition.org)**



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