

Iron for Strong Blood



**California
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WIC!**

Why do I need iron?

Everyone needs iron for:

- strong blood to carry oxygen to the whole body
- fighting colds and flu
- keeping energy levels up
- growing well

What is anemia?

When someone's blood is low in iron, they have anemia. Low iron in the blood can make someone:

- look pale, feel tired and weak
- eat poorly and not grow well
- get sick more easily
- have trouble learning, and do poorly in school or work

If you are pregnant, your baby could be born too soon or too small.



How can I get enough iron for myself and my family?

Babies:

Breastfeed your baby. Breastmilk has everything your baby needs! If you give your baby formula, always use formula with iron.

At about 6 months, offer high-iron foods. These include baby cereal with iron (oat, barley, rice) and pureed plain meats. You can add pureed vitamin C rich vegetables and fruits to the baby cereals.

From 6 to 9 months, introduce mashed vegetables and fruits, baby meats, mashed beans or tofu. You can also cook ground meat and mash it for your baby. Give your baby a vitamin C vegetable or fruit at least once a day.

Children and adults:

Eat 2 to 3 foods that are high in iron every day. Look at the list in this pamphlet for some ideas. Enriched cereals are great snacks for your children!

Eat vitamin C foods when you eat iron foods. Check the list in this pamphlet.

Drink milk, juice, or water with meals. Coffee and tea can make you take in less iron from the food you eat. If you drink coffee or tea, drink them between meals.

If you are pregnant, be sure to take your prenatal vitamins. They have extra iron. If you have low iron, ask your doctor about taking iron pills. After your baby is born, check with your doctor to see if you should still take prenatal vitamins or iron pills.

If your baby or child has low iron, their doctor might give you iron drops for them. Be careful to give the right amount of iron drops.

Too much iron from pills or drops can poison your child! WARNING: Be sure to keep iron pills and drops out of reach and safely stored away from children.





Foods high in iron

Choose these foods for lots of iron

Meats:

- Clams
- Liver
- Beef
- Turkey
- Chicken
- Fish
- Pork



Non-meat foods:

- Enriched cereals
- Beans, dried peas
- Prune juice
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Enriched bread and tortillas
- Enriched rice, pasta and cooked cereal
- Leafy greens: collards, chard, kale, mustard

Non-meat foods with the most iron are at the top of the list.

Some babies may have food allergies. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about allergies.





Eat vitamin C foods with iron foods:

Vitamin C helps your body use iron. Eat a vitamin C food when you eat iron foods, or cook them together. Examples:

- Drink a small glass of orange juice with your breakfast cereal
- Cook your beans with some tomatoes
- Have some salsa on your taco
- Give your baby some fruit with her cereal

Some high vitamin C foods are:

Vegetables:

potato
tomato
broccoli
cauliflower
cabbage
bell pepper

Fruits:

orange
cantaloupe
mango
papaya
grapefruit
strawberry

Juices :

orange
grapefruit
tomato
lemon
lime
all 100%
vitamin C juices

Tips for getting more iron

- Add a little bit of meat to other foods.
- Cook foods in cast iron skillets, pots, or pans (heavy black ones).
- Soak dry beans for several hours in cold water before you cook them. Pour off the water and use new water to cook the beans.



Sample menu for you and your child

Breakfast Enriched cereal with fruit and milk, orange juice, toast



Snack Crackers with peanut butter, fruit



Lunch Soft tacos with beans and meat, lettuce, tomatoes, and milk



Snack Tuna sandwich



Dinner Chicken with rice, broccoli and carrots, fruit and milk



Eggs Mexicali:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups** salsa or tomato sauce
- 15 oz** can of beans (pinto, black, etc.), rinsed and drained, or 2 cups cooked beans
- 6-8** eggs
- 1/4 cup** cheese, grated

Directions:

1. Combine salsa and beans in a pan.
2. Cook over medium heat stirring until the mixture boils.
3. Crack each egg and place over the mixture one at a time.
4. Cover with a lid and cook until the eggs are firm—about 6 minutes.
5. Sprinkle with grated cheese and heat until the cheese melts.
6. Serve with tortillas and rice. Serves 4-6.



California Department of Public Health, California WIC Program
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