

Iron Deficiency Anaemia

What is iron deficiency anaemia?

If the body does not have enough iron to make healthy red blood cells, you can develop anaemia. Iron deficiency anaemia in children can cause tiredness, poor concentration, poor growth, paleness and it can affect their appetite.

Anaemia in infants and young children

Infants and young children can develop anaemia if they are given cow's milk when they are too young, if they do not get enough iron in their diet, or if they drink too much cow's milk. Having more than one pint (600ml) of cow's milk will reduce a child's appetite.

To help prevent anaemia in infants and young children:

- Avoid cow's milk as a drink until one year of age
- For children over one year, limit cow's milk to one pint (600ml) per day
- Choose foods that contain iron at most meals and make sure to have red meat 2-3 times per week

Tips to help increase iron in your child's diet

- Iron found in red meat, poultry and fish is the best source as it is easily absorbed by the body – include lean red meat (beef, lamb, pork) about 2-3 times per week
- Vitamin C will help the body to absorb iron from other foods – try to have fruit or vegetables at the same time as any non-meat sources of iron

Meat and poultry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, offal (liver and kidney), ham/bacon
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuna, salmon, mackerel, sardines (fresh or tinned)
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg yolks contain iron
Breakfast cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortified breakfast cereals will have added iron, include a source of vitamin C such as fruit or a small glass of unsweetened fruit juice
Pulses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked beans, lentils, chick peas, kidney beans
Fruit & vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit such as raisins, sultanas or dried apricots • Green leafy vegetables such as spinach and cabbage, broccoli, peas
Nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All nuts contain iron – do not give whole or dried nuts to children under five as they may choke
Bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal bread, wholemeal flour in baking
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark or milk chocolate, cocoa powder or drinking chocolate, liquorice

Iron supplements

Iron supplements should not be taken unless prescribed by your child's doctor.