

## What?

Iron is an essential nutrient.

- Helps make red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body.
- It is a component of enzymes are integral for energy and protein metabolism.
- It has an essential role in maintaining a healthy immune system
- Rapid growth leads to high Iron requirements

Insufficient iron can cause tiredness, lack of energy, irritability, fussiness and more susceptible to infections. More severe iron deficiency, Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA) causes symptoms such as heart palpitations, brittle nails, mouth sores or ulcers.

## When?

At around 6 months\* babies Iron stores from birth begin to deplete and babies become more reliant on Iron rich food sources. From this time breast milk and/or fortified formula are no longer sufficient alone to meet increasing iron requirements. Infants will need to get iron from other dietary sources. Although Iron levels in breastmilk are less than formula, it is better absorbed (up to 50% compared to 4%)

*\*provided the baby has a healthy birth weight and mum had decent iron stores during pregnancy*

# Iron

## How?

By offering a balanced diet and a variety of foods infants should meet their dietary iron needs.

There are two types of dietary iron:

- Haem Iron (animal-based)
- Non-Haem Iron (plant-based)





## TOP TIPS

- Red meat is the best source of iron-offer up to x3 times/week
- Get to know your labels on food-lots of food including cereals are fortified with iron; ideally 12mg per 100g
- Do not give liver to <12months as contains too much Vitamin A
- Unfortified cows milk naturally very low in Iron
- Having sources of vitamin C with non-haem iron rich food can enhance absorption

For example:

- Orange slices or berries with fortified cereal at breakfast.
- Carrot sticks with beans/pulse based food at lunch
- Kiwi or orange slices with dinner

1 and 2 year olds

2 servings a day

3 and 4 year olds

3 or 4 servings a day

Meat serving = ~30g (see below)

Beans/pulses serving = ~40g

Hummus/tofu serving = ~35g

## Haem Iron

This is the easiest type of iron for babies' bodies to absorb and effectively use.. Haem Iron sources come from a variety of animal products including red meats, pork, fish and poultry.

## Non- Haem Iron

This type of iron can be found in a wide variety of foods such as broccoli, beans, lentils, tofu, cereals and ground nuts. We naturally find it more difficult to effectively absorb this type of iron, so it is recommended to eat more of these foods, particularly if not eating haem iron foods. Having a source of vitamin C with non-haem iron rich foods can enhance its absorption

## Serving guide:

An average serving size of cooked beef, lamb, chicken, turkey or fish is about 30g.

A serving size that fits into about 1/3 of your hand is about right for 1-4 year olds.



If you have any concerns about your child's Iron status contact your GP for a review of their Iron levels