

IRON RICH FOOD

Iron deficiency can happen to many children especially toddlers who are picky eaters and drink too much milk, preventing them from ingesting enough iron-rich foods. 16-20 oz/day of milk is plenty to get some calcium and vitamin D in the child's diet but not interfere with getting enough iron. Most infants get plenty of iron in breastmilk or iron-fortified formula. Once they reach 6 months however, they need extra iron in the form of iron-fortified infant cereal and eventually pureed meats and vegetables. Toddlers will need to make sure they consume at least 3 iron-rich foods each day to get enough iron in their diet. Once iron deficiency has been diagnosed, they may also need extra iron supplements to boost their levels until diet changes can provide all of their iron needs. Vitamin C helps the body to absorb the iron we take in so adding plenty of citrus fruits and 4-6oz/day of iron-fortified orange juice will help get the most benefit from the iron that your child eats. Be aware that the tannins and polyphenols in tea and coffee decrease the absorption of iron in the foods you and your child eat.

How Much Iron Do You Need?

Adults need about 18mg/day

Toddlers need about 7-10 mg/day

Iron-Rich Foods

- ❖ Red meat including beef, pork, lamb
- ❖ Chicken and turkey
- ❖ Seafood such as oysters, clams, tuna salmon and shrimp (check with your doctor first before giving shellfish to children under 3 yrs)
- ❖ Beans including kidney, soybeans, lima, navy, pinto, lentils and chickpeas
- ❖ Iron-fortified grains such as bread, cereals, rice and pasta
- ❖ Green leafy vegetables such as collard greens, kale, mustard greens spinach and turnip greens
- ❖ Other green vegetables such as broccoli, swiss chard, asparagus, parsley, watercress and brussel sprouts
- ❖ Nuts
- ❖ Egg yolks
- ❖ Dried fruits such as raisins, prunes, dates and apricots

Vegetarians

Iron from meats is absorbed by the body better than iron from vegetables so vegetarians need to be aware of this and increase iron-rich vegetables in their diet. Also, vegetarians can add high iron foods such as enriched bread and grains, soy protein, wheat germ and bulgur to their diet.

Non-medication option

Lucky Iron Fish is an iron containing metal fish that can be used in cooking to allow extra iron to be infused into food and water. See www.luckyironfish.com for how to use and how to purchase.