

An Iron-Rich Diet for Children



What is Iron?

Iron can be found in the body as an important nutrient for the growth and development of your child. It carries oxygen from the lungs and to the rest of the body where it is stored and used by the muscles. Iron gives your child the energy they need to concentrate and play.

Why does my child need an iron-rich diet?

Without iron, your child may become easily tired, irritable, and pale-looking. If your child's diet does not have enough iron for their body's needs, your child may develop a condition called iron deficiency. Especially if your child is a picky eater, they may not be getting enough iron that their body needs. It is very important for your child to include iron-rich foods in their diets.

Ages	Daily Recommended Amount (mg)
7 – 12 months	11
1 – 3 years	7
4 – 8 years	10
9 – 13 years	8

What foods have iron in them?

There are two types of iron: **Heme** iron and **Non-heme** iron can be found in both animal and plant products.

Heme-iron is easier for the body to absorb than non-heme iron. However, non-heme can be absorbed just as easily in the body if it is consumed with heme-iron.

If your child does not eat meat products, they will have to eat twice as much non-heme iron.

Heme Foods	Non-Heme Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Beef ○ Pork ○ Veal ○ Lamb ○ Fish or seafood (fresh, frozen, or canned) ○ Chicken ○ Turkey ○ Egg yolk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kidney, navy beans, and lima beans, chickpeas ○ Whole grains breads, pasta, rice and hot cereals ○ Dried figs, apricots, dates, fruits, raisins ○ Dark leafy greens ○ Tofu ○ Almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, and peanuts ○ Blackstrap molasses

How to increase iron absorption in your child?

- **Combination.** Combine heme-iron rich foods with non-heme rich foods
- **Avoid too much milk.** Milk has many other important nutrients for your child’s growth and development, but it can also prevent the absorption of iron. Too much milk can also fill your child’s belly so they eat less solid foods at meal time. Limited milk to 2 cups a day.
- **Vitamin C.** Vitamin C helps with the absorption of iron so include a source of Vitamin C with every meal. Sources of Vitamin C include:
 - Broccoli
 - Grapefruit
 - Potatoes
 - Green and red peppers
 - Strawberries
 - Peas
 - Cabbage
 - Cantaloupe
 - Tomatoes
 - Brussel sprouts

SAMPLE MENU

BREAKFAST	1 egg with 1 slice whole wheat toast or Oatmeal with strawberries ½ cup milk
MORNING SNACK	Celery with peanut butter and raisins
LUNCH	Tuna sandwich on whole-wheat bread 1 cup of milk
AFTERNOON SNACK	Hummus with pita bread and red pepper slices
SUPPER	Hamburger Casserole* (see recipe) Or Chicken leg, baked sweet potato and cooked broccoli
EVENING SNACK	Corn Bran ½ cup milk

A quick and easy meal to try that is a high iron choice:

Easy Hamburger Casserole

You will need:

- 1lb. Lean Hamburger meat
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 can tomato soup
- mashed potatoes (leftovers may be used)
- non-hydrogenated margarine

- In a pan, brown the meat and onion until there is no pink meat left and place the hamburger/onion mixture in a casserole dish
- Add a can of tomato soup and mix together
- Cover the hamburger mixture with the mash potatoes
- Dot potatoes with of small amount of margarine
- Bake in 350 to 375-degree oven until hot, uncovered

If you have any question about your child's nutrition, please call your Registered Dietitian

Registered Dietitian:

905-378-4647 ext _____

HOW ARE WE DOING?

*You can provide feedback
or suggestions for
Niagara Health Clinical
Nutrition services at:*

www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/clinical-nutrition