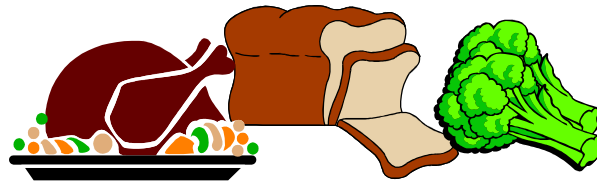


# An Iron-Rich Diet for Young Children





## Why does my child need an iron-rich diet?

Iron-deficiency anemia can result from a low iron diet. In Canada, one third of toddlers aren't getting enough iron. Iron is a mineral that your child needs to help carry oxygen through his or her body. Without enough iron, your child may become tired, irritable or pale looking. Slower development can be another result of low iron stores.

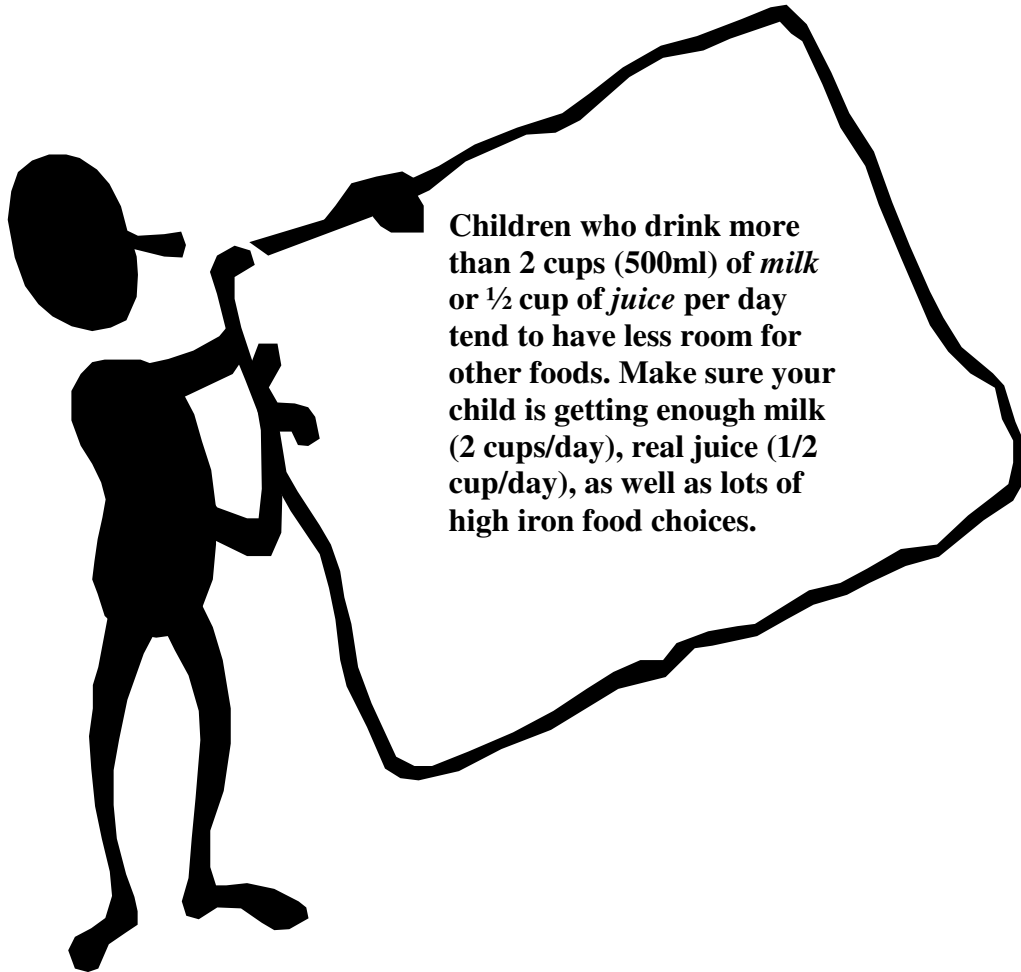
## What foods have iron in them?

Foods contain two kinds of iron: **heme** and **non-heme**. Heme iron is more easy for the body to absorb than non-heme iron. However, if foods that have non-heme iron are eaten at the same time as foods that have heme iron, the heme iron will help the body absorb non-heme iron. Foods high in Vitamin C can also help the body absorb non-heme iron if eaten at the same time. Heme iron and Vitamin C help the body absorb non-heme iron by up to four times.

HEME IRON Food Sources	NON-HEME IRON Food Sources	VITAMIN C Food Sources
Red Meat (e.g. beef, pork, veal, lamb) Fish or seafood (fresh, frozen or canned) Poultry (e.g. Dark chicken and turkey meat)	Fortified breakfast cereals Beans & lentils Whole grain and enriched grain products (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, hot cereals) Nuts Dark leafy green vegetables Eggs and tofu Raisins and dried fruit	Citrus fruits and juices (e.g. oranges, grapefruit) Cantaloupe, Strawberries, Kiwis, and Mangos Broccoli, cauliflower and brussel sprouts Green, red, yellow peppers Tomatoes Turnip
		
High Iron Diet	High Iron Diet	

## How do I increase the amount of iron in my child's diet?

Giving nutrient-rich foods to children is very important to provide them with the nutrition they need and to help them learn to make healthy food choices. Children have small stomachs which means they need small meals and snacks more often than adults. Children are also very active and have high energy needs to keep up with their growing bodies. It is important that every bite counts. Therefore, choose nutrient-rich food choices more often.



Children who drink more than 2 cups (500ml) of *milk* or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of *juice* per day tend to have less room for other foods. Make sure your child is getting enough milk (2 cups/day), real juice (1/2 cup/day), as well as lots of high iron food choices.

**Milk and milk products** are excellent sources of other vitamins and minerals like calcium and vitamin D so it is important for your child to drink milk. However, milk products are low in iron so having too much can decrease the amount of iron your child is getting. Also, **tea and coffee** greatly decrease the amount of iron absorbed into the body and are not recommended for young children.

## TIPS FOR BUYING JUICE!

Check the label and look for:

4 "100% fruit juice", AND

4"Excellent source of Vitamin C"

4Fresh or frozen from concentrate - both are fine



Avoid sweetened fruit drinks like KoolAid, Iced Tea, fruit punches and Tang that are not fortified with vitamin C. When your child does drink juice, offer  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup per day and try to offer it at meals or snacks when non-heme iron foods are being served. This will help your child to absorb more of the iron in the food.

### Some high iron snack and meal ideas

Heme iron ideas	Non-heme iron + Vitamin C
Spaghetti with tomato and meat sauce	Egg sandwich and canned fruit cocktail
Chili	Brown beans on whole wheat toast and juice
Lasagna with meat sauce	Soup with lentils or beans and a piece of citrus fruit
Homemade pizza with vegetables and ground beef	Fortified breakfast cereal with raisins or strawberries or a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice
Meat/potatoes/vegetables dinner (e.g. meatloaf with tomato sauce or chicken leg or lamb chops with potatoes and veg)	Iron fortified pasta with broccoli
Shepherds Pie	Raisin bran muffin and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice
Meat sandwiches (roast beef, tuna, turkey, chicken salad etc.)	Hummus and pita bread with peppers and salad dressing
Chicken or beef stew	Mix a variety of high iron cereals together and have with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice
Hamburger topped with lettuce and tomato	A box of raisins
Macaroni with tuna	Tofu and vegetable stir fry with cauliflower, broccoli, and peppers
Spinach salad with mandarin oranges and chicken or turkey chunks	
Chicken broccoli pasta dishes	
Clam chowder	
Meatballs with pineapple sauce on rice	
Hamburger Casserole (see recipe)	

If your doctor recommends iron supplements for your child, keep these things in mind:

4 Avoid giving your child milk products one hour before and up to two hours after giving the iron supplement (milk products will decrease the amount of iron absorbed)

4 Too much iron is as harmful as too little iron. Therefore, be sure to give your child only the dose recommended by your doctor. Have your child's iron status checked regularly because when it is at a good level, the doctor may decide to stop the iron supplement.

Here's a quick and easy recipe to try that is a high iron choice:

### **Easy Hamburger Casserole**

⇐ 1 lb. **Lean hamburger meat**

⇐ 1 **chopped onion**

Brown until no pink meat remains, drain fat and put hamburger/onion mixture into a casserole dish.

⇐ Add 1 **can tomato soup**

Mix together.

⇐ Add **mashed potatoes (leftovers may be used)**.

Cover hamburger mixture.

⇐ Add **non-hydrogenated margarine**.

Dot potatoes with a small amount.

Bake in 350 to 375 degree oven until hot, uncovered.

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

Dietitian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Handout revised from the Dietitians of Canada handout