

## Boosting Iron Intake for Children and Adolescents

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Iron is found in our blood and helps to carry oxygen around the body and fight infection. If children do not eat enough iron, they may feel tired, look pale, eat less and have no energy to play.

### Types of Iron in Food:

- Haem Iron – (i.e. flesh foods) Well absorbed by the body.
- Non-haem Iron – (i.e. plant foods) Not as well absorbed.

<b>Haem Iron – <u>Best Sources of Iron</u></b>	<b>Non-Haem Iron – <u>Good Sources of Iron</u></b>
Lean meats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef</li> <li>• Lamb</li> <li>• Pork</li> <li>• Chicken</li> </ul> Fish Offal (i.e. liver and kidneys)	Iron-fortified infant cereals Iron-fortified breakfast cereals Wholegrain breads and cereals Leafy green vegetables Eggs Dried fruit Nuts Milo and Ovaltine Legumes (i.e. baked beans and lentils) Tofu

### Combine Vitamin C with Iron-containing Foods

Eating foods high in vitamin C in combination with iron-containing foods will help to increase iron absorption. Good sources of vitamin C include oranges, broccoli, capsicum, and citrus or vitamin-C fortified juices.

**Guidelines for Optimising Iron Intake:**

- For infants under 12 months breastfeed, or use an iron-containing formula.
- Introduce solids at 4-6 months as iron stores will be getting low by this age. Use an iron-containing infant cereal and offer meat and poultry daily once introduced. Offer solids prior to a breast or bottle feed.
- Introduce cow's milk at 12 months, and limit to approximately 500ml per day. Filling up on too much milk may reduce your child's appetite for solids which are better sources of iron.
- Include iron-rich foods in the diet every day. Lean red meat is one of the best sources of iron, so try to include at least a few times each week.
- Include foods high in vitamin C with iron-containing foods to increase absorption.
- If iron supplements have been prescribed, continue with the prescription for the period of time recommended by your child's doctor or dietitian.

**Iron-rich Meal and Snack Ideas:**

- Infant or breakfast cereal fortified with iron (i.e. baby rice cereal, Weet-Bix)
- Peanut butter on toast
- Dried fruit or nuts
- Baked beans on wholemeal toast with orange juice
- Cold meat or chicken on sandwiches
- Home-made hamburgers and meatballs
- Home-made lentil patties
- Home-made spaghetti bolognaise with lean mince
- Soups and casseroles containing legumes
- Milo and Ovaltine with milk

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