

# Iron In Your Diet

**Iron - What is it ?** Iron is a mineral found in the blood and muscles of the human body.

## Why do we need Iron?

Iron is needed to transport oxygen to all parts of the body. A lack of iron in the diet can lead to iron deficiency anaemia. This causes tiredness, loss of appetite, irritability and poor growth in children.

## How can Iron Deficiency Anaemia be prevented:

Regularly include foods which are rich in iron in your diet.

## The list below shows which foods are good sources of Iron

<p><b>Meat</b></p> <p>All meat including chicken and turkey, and especially red meat e.g. beef, lamb, mutton, pork, liver, kidney, tongue, corned beef, beefburgers, sausages, black pudding and pâté.</p>	<p><b>Fish</b></p> <p>Pilchards, sardines, anchovies, tuna, whitebait, shellfish e.g. crab, prawns, cockles, mussels and winkles.</p>
<p><b>Pulses</b></p> <p>Lentils, dahl, soya beans, chick peas, kidney beans, mung beans, baked beans, butter beans, haricot beans, broad beans and black eyed beans.</p>	<p><b>Nuts and Seeds</b></p> <p>Nuts e.g. almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pine nuts, peanuts and peanut butter. Seeds e.g. sesame seeds, linseed. <b>NB. Whole nuts should NOT be given to children under 5 years due to the risk of choking.</b></p>
<p><b>Soya Products</b></p> <p>Tofu, soya mince and soya beanburgers or soya sausages.</p>	<p><b>Wholemeal Products</b></p> <p>Products made from wholemeal flour e.g. bread, chapattis and pasta.</p>
<p><b>Vegetables</b></p> <p>Dark green leafy types e.g. broccoli, spinach, cabbage, curly kale and spring greens. Also peas and mushy peas, okra, karela, runner beans, and watercress.</p>	<p><b>Fruit</b></p> <p>Dried fruit e.g. prunes, figs, apricots, sultanas, raisins and mixed fruit.</p>
<p><b>Breakfast Cereals</b></p> <p>All "iron fortified" cereals e.g. Weetabix, Bran Flakes, Shredded Wheat, All Bran, Special K, Ready Brek, Cheerios</p>	<p><b>Miscellaneous</b></p> <p>Cocoa powder, plain chocolate, malt loaf, fruit cake, chilli powder, liquorice, curry powder and tahini paste.</p>
<p><b>Eggs</b></p> <p>Eggs, especially the yolk (make sure eggs are well cooked).</p>	

How much iron you need to eat depends upon your age. Women need more than men, children also need more when they are growing.

# How can I make the most of the Iron that I eat?

## Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps the iron to be absorbed, so it is important to eat foods containing iron and vitamin c together. Remember, vitamin c can be easily destroyed by cooking your vegetables for too long.

## The list below shows which foods are good sources of Vitamin C

- Fruit: especially oranges, tangerines, pears, grapefruits, mangoes, strawberries and kiwi.
- Fruit drinks: like pure fruit juice, smoothies and drinks with added vitamin c such as Ribena and C-Vit.
- Vegetables & salads: especially potato, cabbage, tomato, peppers, mixed vegetables and karela.

**Drinking tea, coffee, chocolate, herbal teas, red wine or beer with meals reduces our ability to absorb iron from food eaten at that meal.**

## Sample Meal Ideas

These meals are good for all the family but may need to be adapted for younger children.

Breakfast	Snack Meals	Main Meals
Fruit Juice Boiled egg Wholemeal Bread	Jacket potato Baked beans Satsuma	Meat stew Potato Cabbage
1/2 grapefruit Grilled bacon Toast	Wholemeal bread sandwiches e.g. ham and tomato, tuna and watercress	Lamb and spinach curry Wholemeal Chapatti Salad
Peanut butter on toast Orange juice	Quiche Lorraine Green salad Dried Apricots	Beany shepherd's pie Mixed vegetables
Fortified Breakfast cereal Milk Dried fruit	Dahl Wholemeal Chapatti Fruit salad	Tomato and mushroom omelette Crusty bread

**If you are pregnant, have food allergies or are on a special diet, please seek further advice from your doctor or dietitian.**

## Advice for babies

- Continue to use breast or infant formula milk until your baby is one year old. Cow's milk is a poor source of iron and should not be used as the main milk drink until your baby is one year old.
- Wean your baby at the right age - ideally by 6 months (no later) and not before 17 weeks.
- Wean onto a wide range of iron rich foods, and remember to include foods which contain vitamin c.
- At one year old your child should be eating enough iron rich foods. You can now change on to full cream cow's milk. Aim for the equivalent of one pint of milk per day, any more than this and your baby might be too full of milk to want to eat!

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