

Iron for Growing Brains

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Simple ways to help your child get enough iron.

Adequate iron is essential for a child's rapidly developing brain. Iron helps with learning, focus, memory, and emotional regulation.

For Infants

- ✓ Breast milk or iron-fortified formula provides the iron babies need during the first months of life. Once solids are introduced, offer iron-rich foods daily.
- ✓ Once starting solids, **offer at least 2 servings of iron-rich foods** daily.
- ✓ **Introduce vitamin C-rich foods** (e.g., citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes, dark leafy greens) to help absorb iron.
- ✓ **Offer minimal cow's milk until age 1**, as it can interfere with iron absorption.
- ✓ Consider **pureed meats** as a first food, since iron from animal sources is more easily absorbed.

For Children (1-5 years old)

- ✓ **Limit milk intake to less than 24 oz per day**—excess milk can increase the risk of iron deficiency.
- ✓ Aim for **3 servings of iron-rich foods daily** (e.g., fortified cereals, meat, tofu, beans).
- ✓ If meeting iron needs through food is difficult, consider **an iron supplement** (talk to your pediatrician first!).

Example of iron supplementation:

💧 **NovaFerrum Yummy:** A liquid iron supplement for infants and toddlers, free of sugar, gluten, and artificial flavors.

💧 **Mary Ruth's Vegan Liquid Iron:** A liquid iron supplement clean label project certified.

How to Enhance Iron Absorption

🥬 **Pair iron-rich foods with vitamin C** (e.g. serve beans with bell peppers) to boost absorption.

 **Avoid giving iron with calcium-rich foods** (e.g., milk, cheese) as calcium can block iron absorption. Try to space them apart.

 **Cook with cast iron pans**—this can add small amounts of iron to food naturally.

By following these dietary guidelines, you can help ensure your child is getting enough iron!