

Infants and iron

At approximately 6 months of age, your infant **MAY** be ready to start solid foods. When providing foods, be sure that they are well-cooked, and either pureed or mashed if the baby is not yet ready to take them in small pieces. It's important to be aware of foods that are higher in iron, to ensure that your child does not become iron deficient and has a well balanced diet.

Babies store enough iron for their first six months of life. However, after six months, their iron needs increase.¹ Although breast milk and iron fortified infant formula can supply adequate iron, it's important to know which foods can provide iron as they transition to finger foods. Please note that the food suggestions below can be pureed if your child is not yet ready for finger foods.



Finger foods higher in iron

- Steamed broccoli
- Beans & lentils
- Scrambled eggs
- Whole grain pancakes and waffles
- Whole grain bread with nut butter
- Try adding nut butter to bread or fruits
- Cooked carrots, soft
- Roasted butternut squash
- Sweet potatoes & winter squash
- Steamed potatoes
- Brown rice
- Fortified whole grain infant cereal/baby puffs
- Meat – beef, chicken
Always cook and puree meat and poultry prior to serving for babies 6-9 months of age. At 9 months, they may be able to have well-cooked, minced, or finely chopped meat or poultry.

**Note: Cow's milk is NOT a good source of iron.

Vitamin C may enhance (help) the absorption of iron – Offering foods higher in iron with foods that are high in vitamin C will result in better iron absorption. Keep in mind that children under the age of 2 should not have juice, therefore, we should look for other food sources of vitamin C.

- **Food sources of vitamin C:** Citrus fruits, berries, bell peppers, white potatoes, peaches, apples/applesauce, bananas, tomatoes

Calcium may inhibit (block) the absorption of iron – Avoid serving high iron foods with foods higher in calcium. For example, dairy products are high in calcium and can often limit the amount of iron that is absorbed from other foods.

References:

1. Kaufmann, C. (2018, January 5). Foods to Fight Iron Deficiency. Retrieved from <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/iron-deficiency>
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov).

Disclaimer: The information provided was created by our team of Registered Dietitians. Use this handout as a resource, but as always, please ask your doctor or registered dietitian prior to making any drastic changes in your child's diet. The recommendation for finger foods at 6 months of age is based off general recommendations. Please consult with your doctor to be sure your child is developmentally ready to start on finger foods.



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