

Infants and iron

Iron is an essential mineral that supports important functions in the body, including red blood cell production and brain development. Without enough iron, children are at risk for iron deficiency, which can impact their growth and health.

Around 6 months of age, your baby may be ready to start eating solid foods. As you introduce solids, it's important to prioritize iron-rich options. Babies are born with enough iron stores to last about six months. After that, they need to get iron from foods to support healthy development and avoid a higher risk of iron deficiency.¹



Finger foods higher in iron

- Cooked broccoli
- Dark leafy greens, such as spinach and kale
- Cooked potatoes
- Tomato paste
- Whole grains, such as breads, pancakes, brown rice and pasta
- Meat such as beef, chicken, turkey, and pork
- Beans & lentils
- Scrambled eggs
- Tofu
- Fortified breakfast cereals

Important: As you introduce iron-rich foods, be sure to modify textures and serving methods based on your baby's feeding skills and developmental readiness.

Vitamin C helps your baby absorb more iron!

Offer iron-rich foods alongside foods high in vitamin C. Since children under 2 shouldn't have juice, offer vitamin C-rich foods!

- **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.

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

References:

1. National Institutes of Health. (2022, April 5). Iron. National Institutes of Health. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional>

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 an 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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