

STAY STRONG WITH

# IRON

## But Why Iron?

Iron is important for the healthy growth of infants, children and women during pregnancy. Iron strengthens your immune system, helps with brain development and gives you energy. When there is not enough iron in the blood, you will develop iron-deficiency anemia. Getting your hemoglobin levels checked can help detect low iron. People with iron-deficiency anemia may experience one or more of these symptoms:

- Shortness of Breath
- Frequent Headaches
- Feeling Tired, Weak, or Grouchy
- Slow Growth or Development
- Pale Skin
- Decreased Appetite
- Unusual Cravings for Non-Food Items
- Trouble Learning or Working

## Enjoy a variety of iron-rich foods.

### Meats

- Pork
- Lamb
- Beef
- Liver
- Fish/Shellfish\*
- Chicken/Turkey

### Non-Meat Foods

- Tofu
- Nuts, Nut Butter & Seeds
- WIC Approved Cereals
- Dried Fruit (Apricots, Raisins, Plums)
- Beans/Lentils
- Enriched Bread & Pasta
- Greens (Turnips, Collards, Spinach)

\*While fish provides many nutritional benefits during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and early childhood, certain types of fish are high in mercury and should be avoided.

Visit [fda.gov/fishadvice](http://fda.gov/fishadvice) for more information.

## Help Your Child Get Enough Iron

Low iron can impact a child's behavior, memory and learning. Help prevent your child from having low iron levels by following these tips:

For children over one, limit cow's milk to 2 cups per day.

Encourage the whole family to eat citrus fruits and other foods high in Vitamin C.

Feed your child a well-balanced diet with foods that contain iron.

## Give Your Iron Levels a BOOST!

Enjoy your tea and coffee between meals. When consumed with meals, these drinks can interfere with iron absorption.

You need calcium but not during your meals. Calcium can decrease iron absorption, so have your milk and yogurt as snacks between your meals.

Cook with cast iron pots and skillets. These can add iron to your diet, especially if you cook acidic foods at high temperatures.

Cook plant sources of iron (such as vegetables) to increase iron absorption. Your body absorbs 6% of the iron from raw broccoli, compared to 30% from cooked broccoli.

## PUMP UP THE VITAMIN C!

Vitamin C foods help your body use iron. Eat foods high in Vitamin C with your iron-rich foods. Good sources of Vitamin C include:

- Bell Peppers
- Cabbage
- Grapefruit
- Oranges
- Tomatoes
- Broccoli
- Cantalope
- Kiwi
- Strawberries
- WIC Juices 100% (up to 4oz.)

## IRON FOR BABY

Do not give your baby cow's milk until he is over 12 months old.

Full term babies are usually born with enough iron stores for the first 4-6 months of life. If you are breastfeeding, ask your baby's doctor if an iron supplement may be needed after the first 4-6 months.

Preterm babies may need additional iron earlier than 4-6 months. If your baby was born prematurely, ask your doctor if an iron supplement is needed.

## IRON FOR PREGNANCY

Pregnant women need more iron to support the increased blood volume and nutrient requirements for their growing baby. Not consuming enough iron will put you at risk for having a premature or low birth weight baby. Be sure to take your prenatal vitamins and only take iron pills if your doctor gives them to you.



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