

# Pump Up the Iron!



## WHY IS IRON IMPORTANT?

Iron is an important nutrient needed in your child's daily diet. Iron carries oxygen around the body to all our cells. Without iron our bodies would not be able to function properly, because not enough oxygen would be available. The following symptoms may occur if your child's diet is low in iron:

- Weakness or fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Cold hands
- Increased heart rate
- Irritability
- Pale skin
- Decreased concentration (which can affect your child's ability to learn)
- Decreased immune function (which makes it harder for your child to fight off illness)

## HOW MUCH IRON DOES YOUR CHILD NEED?

Age	Iron Requirement
Infants (0-6 months)	0.3 mg Iron/day
Infants (6-12 months)	11 mg Iron/day
Children (1-12 years)	7-10 mg Iron/day
Adolescent Boys	11 mg Iron/day
Adolescent Girls	15 mg Iron/day

## GETTING ENOUGH IRON IS EASY

Although iron deficiency is common in young children, with careful planning it can be avoided. Iron is naturally found in many foods and is fortified in many products. Include the following iron-rich foods into your child's regular diet.

\*Note: Some foods may not be appropriate for children < 4yrs old due to choking hazard or food allergy.

Food Source	Mg/Serving	Food Source	Mg/Serving
Raisin Bran (½ cup)	12.0	Beef (3 oz)	3.0
Total Cereal (½ cup)	9.0	Black Beans (½ cup)	1.8
Cooked Oatmeal (½ cup)	5.0	Tuna (¾ cup)	1.8
Soybeans (½ cup)	4.4	Dark Chicken (3.5 oz)	1.7
*Sunflower Seeds (¼ cup)	4.0	Raisins (½ cup)	1.5
Lean Hamburger (1 patty)	3.9	Peas (½ cup)	1.4
Molasses (1 Tbsp.)	3.5	*Hard-boiled Egg	1.1
Tofu (½ cup)	3.4	Whole Wheat Bread (1 slice)	0.9
Cooked Lentils (½ cup)	3.3	Broccoli (½ cup)	0.6
Cheerios (½ cup)	3.2	*Peanut Butter (2 Tbsp)	0.6

Source: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/nutrition/348-371/348-371.html> and <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/iron.asp>

## IRON ABSORPTION

Food may influence the amount of iron that is absorbed by the body. Some foods will increase iron absorption, while other foods will decrease iron absorption.

Vitamin C	Dairy Products
<p>Iron found in animal foods is easily absorbed, but the iron found in plant foods is not absorbed as easily. Iron absorption can be increased in plant foods when your child consumes foods high in vitamin C.</p> <p>Good sources of Vitamin C include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Orange, tomato, grapefruit juice</li><li>• Oranges</li><li>• Strawberries</li><li>• Tomatoes &amp; tomato sauce</li><li>• Broccoli</li><li>• Potatoes</li><li>• Peppers</li><li>• Kiwi</li></ul> <p>Combine these foods with iron-rich foods to increase your child's iron intake.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chili</li><li>• Eggs w/ tomatoes, peppers, or broccoli</li><li>• Spaghetti &amp; meatballs w/ tomato sauce</li><li>• Bean burrito w/ tomatoes or salsa</li><li>• Orange juice w/ iron-fortified cereal</li><li>• Whole-grain bread w/ peanut butter</li></ul>	<p>A child that consumes a large amount of dairy products, including milk, cheese, and yogurt may be at increased risk of becoming iron deficient. This is due to the fact that milk is low in iron, and also because milk may fill your child up and cause them to eat less iron-rich foods. If your child is four years old or younger, limit their milk intake to 16-20 ounces/day.</p> 

## TRY THIS IRON-RICH TRAIL MIX RECIPE

### Ingredients

½ cup butter or margarine  
1 tsp salt  
4 ½ tsp Worcestershire sauce  
2 ⅔ cup Cheerios  
2 ⅔ cup Rice Chex®  
2 ⅔ cup Wheat Chex®  
1 cup peanuts (caution with children < 4 years, or with peanut allergy)  
1 cup pretzels  
1 cup raisins

### Directions

1. Melt margarine in pan
2. Stir in salt and Worcestershire sauce
3. Add cereal, nuts, raisins, and pretzels
4. Bake for 1 hour at 250° stirring occasionally

Serve as a snack with orange juice

### Websites to visit for more information:

Office of Dietary Supplements: Iron Fact Sheet  
<http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/iron.asp>

Kidshealth provides information for parents, kids, and teens. Search 'iron' to find related information  
[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute:  
Iron Deficiency Anemia  
[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/ida/ida\\_what.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/ida/ida_what.html)

Recipe Adapted from WIC "Think Iron" handout.