

Iron

Iron is needed by your child's body to make blood and to carry oxygen around the body. We get iron from the food we eat.

Babies are born with enough iron in their body to last around six months. After six months, babies are at risk of low iron levels and should start eating solid foods.

Good foods to give are:

- Red meat, like beef, lamb or pork
- Fish, like tinned sardines or pilchards
- Brown bread
- Breakfast cereals
- Dried fruit, like raisins or sultanas
- Green vegetables, like cabbage, broccoli or spinach
- Baked beans
- Lentils
- Chickpeas

After six months you can also give your child eggs – as long as they are well cooked, not runny. Peanut butter can also be given after six months if there are no allergies in the family.

Giving drinks and foods with lots of Vitamin C is also important to keep iron levels high. Good foods for Vitamin C are:

- Fresh fruit, like oranges and berries
- Vegetables, like broccoli, peas, cabbage, potatoes and peppers
- Fruit juice – though only give your child juice at mealtimes to protect their teeth

If your child does not get enough iron, they will suffer from anaemia. Children with anaemia will look pale and are likely to be underweight. They may also be very sleepy, develop more slowly and be ill more often.

To look after your child's iron levels:

- Give them at least three foods with good levels of iron every day
- Give food or drink containing Vitamin C at the same time they have the food containing iron
- Avoid giving tea or drinks with caffeine as they stop the body from taking in the iron we get from food

- Do not give cows milk as the main drink until the child is at least one year old, because it does not have added iron
- After the child is one year old, try not to give more than the recommended amount of milk – that's two or three breastfeeds per day, or two or three cups of milk