

# Iron for Strong Blood



**California  
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# Why do I need iron?

## Everyone needs iron for:

- strong blood to carry oxygen to the whole body
- fighting colds and flu
- keeping energy levels up
- growing well

## What is anemia?

When someone's blood is low in iron, they have anemia. Low iron in the blood can make someone:

- look pale, feel tired and weak
- eat poorly and not grow well
- get sick more easily
- have trouble learning, and do poorly in school or work

If you are pregnant, your baby could be born too soon or too small.





# Foods with iron

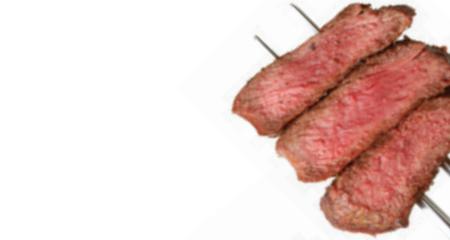
## Meats:

- Clams
- Liver and organ meats
- Beef
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Fish
- Pork

## Non-meat foods:

- Enriched cereals
- Beans, Lentils, Soybeans
- Tofu, firm
- Leafy greens: spinach, collards, chard, kale
- Whole grains
- Enriched bread, tortillas, rice, pasta, cooked cereal
- Peanut Butter
- Dried Fruit
- Eggs

♥ Foods with the most iron are at the top of the list.



## Eat vitamin C foods with iron foods:

Vitamin C helps your body use iron, especially from non-meat foods. Eat a vitamin C food when you eat iron foods, or cook them together. Examples:

- Drink a small glass of orange juice with your breakfast cereal
- Cook your beans with some tomatoes
- Have some salsa on your taco
- Give your baby some fruit with her cereal

### Some high vitamin C foods are:

#### Vegetables:

.....  
potato  
tomato  
broccoli  
cauliflower  
cabbage  
bell pepper

#### Fruits:

.....  
orange  
cantaloupe  
mango  
papaya  
grapefruit  
strawberry

#### Juices:

.....  
orange  
grapefruit  
tomato  
lemon  
lime  
all 100%  
vitamin C  
juices



## Tips for getting more iron

- Add a little bit of meat to other foods.
- Cook foods in cast iron skillets, pots, or pans (heavy black ones).
- Soak dry beans for several hours in cold water before you cook them. Pour off the water and use new water to cook the beans.



# How can I get enough iron for myself and my family?

## Babies:

**Breastfeed your baby.** Breastmilk has everything your baby needs! If you give your baby formula, always use formula with iron.

**At about 6 months,** offer high-iron foods. These include baby cereal with iron (oat, barley, rice) and pureed plain meats. You can add pureed vitamin C rich vegetables and fruits to the baby cereals.

**From 6 to 9 months,** introduce mashed vegetables and fruits, baby meats, mashed beans or tofu. You can also cook ground meat and mash it for your baby. Give your baby a vitamin C vegetable or fruit at least once a day.

**Around 1 year,** wean your baby from the bottle and use a cup. Children only need 3 to 4 small servings of milk products a day. If children drink too much milk (more than 16 oz), they may not be hungry at mealtime. Avoid giving too much juice—4 ounces is enough.



## Children and adults:

**Eat 2 to 3 foods that are high in iron every day.**

Look at the list in this pamphlet for some ideas.

**Eat vitamin C foods when you eat iron foods.**

Check the list in this pamphlet.

**If you are pregnant, be sure to take your prenatal vitamins.** Most have extra iron. If you have low iron, ask your doctor about taking iron pills. After your baby is born, check with your doctor to see if you should still take prenatal vitamins or iron pills.

### **Giving iron drops and taking iron pills.**

Be sure to follow your doctor's directions.

Too much iron from drops or pills can poison your child. Keep iron pills and drops safely stored away from children.



# Sample menu

for you and your child

## Breakfast

Enriched cereal with fruit and milk, orange juice, toast



## Snack

Crackers with peanut butter, fruit



## Lunch

Soft tacos with beans and meat, lettuce, tomatoes, and milk



## Snack

Tuna sandwich



## Dinner

Chicken with rice, broccoli and carrots, fruit and milk





## Eggs Mexicali:

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups** salsa or tomato sauce
  - 15 oz** can of beans (pinto, black, etc.), rinsed and drained, or 2 cups cooked beans
  - 6-8** eggs
  - 1/4 cup** cheese, grated
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### Directions:

1. Combine salsa and beans in a pan.
2. Cook over medium heat stirring until the mixture boils.
3. Crack each egg and place over the mixture one at a time.
4. Cover with a lid and cook until the eggs are firm—about 6 minutes.
5. Sprinkle with grated cheese and heat until the cheese melts.
6. Serve with tortillas and rice. Serves 4-6.



**California Department of Public Health  
California WIC Program**

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