



# Iron for Your Toddler & Young Child



## Why is iron important?

Iron is part of good nutrition. Toddlers' and young children's brains rely on iron to develop structures that last a lifetime. Their bodies need iron to grow, to have energy for playing, learning, and relationships, and to resist colds and infections.

## What happens if my child doesn't get enough iron?

Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in children. A toddler/child without enough iron might be pale, have dark circles under their eyes, have a poor appetite, get sick more often, or be tired, weak, cranky, fussy, anxious, clingy, or depressed. Their mental and physical skills may even be affected.

## How can I make sure my child gets enough iron?

There is plenty of iron in the foods listed on the back of this page. A child can get all the iron they need from these foods. For more information, see the BC HealthFiles on [iron](#), [iron foods](#), and [helping toddlers eat well](#). *Iron pills/drops can be harmful - do not give your child iron pills or drops unless a doctor prescribes them. Keep them out of reach from your child(ren).*

### Is your child getting enough iron?

#### My child:

- Is offered meat, chicken, or fish at least once a day, most days of the week
- Is offered beans, tofu, eggs or nuts and seeds when served a meatless meal
- Is offered whole grains and cereals every day
- Is offered vegetables or fruit (Vitamin C foods) at meal and snack times
- Drinks no more than 750 mL of milk each day
- Drinks no more than 250 mL of juice each day
- Eats dinner with the rest of the family
- Doesn't drink coffee, black or green tea

If you ticked all of the above, you are doing well.  
If a box was missed see the reverse of this handout for more iron-rich food ideas.

### 10 Iron Foods Kids Love!

- ☆ Fortified dry cereals
- ☆ Peanut butter & banana slices on whole wheat bread
- ☆ Burritos (beef, refried beans, cheese & tomatoes wrapped in a flour tortilla)
- ☆ Mild chili with beef & beans/lentils
- ☆ Gingerbread molasses cookies
- ☆ Pork & beans
- ☆ Hamburgers made with lean beef
- ☆ Dried apricots (serve in iron-fortified cereal or oatmeal, or as a cookie ingredient)
- ☆ Split pea soup & enriched crackers
- ☆ Meatball sandwiches



Interior Health

Food Security & Community Nutrition Program  
[www.interiorhealth.ca/healthy\\_eating.aspx](http://www.interiorhealth.ca/healthy_eating.aspx)  
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Cooking in cast iron pans can add a little iron to stir-fries, pasta sauces, omelets, etc.

