

Meeting Your Baby's Iron Needs when Breast and Formula Feeding (6-12 Months)

Until about six months of age, your baby gets enough iron from breastmilk or formula and iron that was stored during your pregnancy. At around six months this stored iron is gone, so your baby needs more iron in her diet from foods in addition to breastmilk or formula. Iron is important for growth and brain development. Continue breast and/or formula feedings and start offering your baby iron-rich foods every day.

Iron is a mineral found in animal foods like meats, poultry and fish and plant foods like enriched cereals, tofu and legumes such as dried beans, peas and lentils. Iron from breastmilk, meat, poultry or fish is better absorbed by the body than iron from plant foods. To increase the iron absorption from plant foods serve them with foods rich in vitamin C, or with meat, poultry or fish.

This chart shows how much iron to aim for every day.

Age (months)	< Aim for an intake of milligrams (mg/day)	Stay below mg/day
0-6	0.27	40
7-12	11	40

Use the information in this factsheet to help your baby get enough iron for healthy growth.



Steps you can take

- 1 Offer your baby iron-rich foods two or more times a day, including fish, poultry, meat or meat alternatives and iron-fortified infant cereals.
 - 1 Start iron-rich foods when your baby is around six months of age. Iron-rich foods should be the first foods you introduce to your baby.

homemade muffins, pancakes or pasta sauces.

Find the right balance between solid foods and liquids

- | If your baby drinks too much liquid, she won't be hungry for iron-rich foods.
- | Continue to breastfeed for up to two years or longer, but make sure that your baby is also eating solid foods, including at least two iron rich foods each day.
- | If your baby is formula fed, continue until 9-12 months of age but make sure that your baby is also eating solid foods, including at least two iron rich foods each day.
- | After 9-12 months of age, 3.25% homogenized whole milk can be given, either in small amounts along with breastmilk or formula, or as the only milk source.
- | If cow's milk is the only milk source, it is important that your baby is eating a variety of solid foods, including at least two iron-rich foods a day.
 - | Offer up to 2 cups (500 mL) of cow's milk a day, and not more than 3 cups (750 mL).
 - | Give milk and other fluids in a regular cup.
- | Limit juice to 125-175 mL (1/2-3/4 cup) per day. Offer fruit rather than juice. Your baby does not need juice.
- | If your baby is not taking any iron-rich foods by 7 months, talk to her health care provider.

Meal ideas for your baby

Try these healthy iron-rich meals. Offer a variety of soft textures from six months of age.

- | Thick soup or stew made with minced soft-cooked beef, beans, enriched pasta and mixed chopped vegetables.
- | Minced, finely chopped chicken served with mashed turnip, green peas and quinoa.
- | Tuna-and-spinach omelette served with whole-grain toast and ripe cantaloupe minced or cut into small pieces.
- | Black-bean dip spread over whole-wheat toast, served with tomato soup.
- | Infant cereal served with chopped hard-boiled egg and small pieces of ripe kiwi fruit.
- | Salmon-and-broccoli noodle casserole served with honeydew melon cut into small pieces.
- | Ground meat mixed with baked beans served with baked chopped

potato and pieces of soft-cooked asparagus.

- | Pureed steak served with soft-cooked cauliflower and cheese sauce, frozen green pea/carrot mix and iron-fortified infant cereal.
- | Homemade blueberry muffin made with iron-fortified infant cereal.

Special Considerations

Iron and Constipation

- | Eating iron-rich foods will not lead to constipation.
- | The stool habits of babies can vary. Talk to your doctor if you think your baby is constipated.

Premature infants and low-birth weight infants

- | Your doctor will likely recommend giving an iron supplement to your baby from 8 weeks until one year of age. Do not give your baby an iron supplement unless recommended by your doctor or health care provider.

Iron supplements

- | Most babies do not need an iron supplement. If you think your baby is not getting enough iron speak with a health care provider. Do not give your baby an iron supplement unless recommended by your health care provider. Too much iron can be harmful.

Vegan/vegetarian infant

- | Iron from plant foods is not well absorbed. Vegetarians need almost twice as much iron than non-vegetarians. Iron needs can be met with a well planned diet.
- | Offer a variety of iron-rich plant foods along with vitamin C-rich foods every day.



Additional Resources

- | Food Sources of Vitamin C
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMfoXAU=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfoXAU=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- | Food Sources of Iron [www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrUQM=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMfrUQM=&PreviewHandout=bA==)
- | Starting Solids with Your Baby When Breast and Formula Feeding
[www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?
Portal=UbY=&id=JMPmXwY=&PreviewHandout=bA==](http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMPmXwY=&PreviewHandout=bA==)

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Notes

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