

The Importance of Iron in the Diet



A healthy eating routine can help boost your health today and in the years to come.

Iron is an essential nutrient that the body needs in small amounts for healthy growth and development. It is especially important for fetal growth and development. It supports neurological development and the immune system function. Individuals who are pregnant or who are planning to become pregnant are advised to take a supplement containing iron when recommended by their healthcare provider.

Iron deficiency anemia (IDA), a condition in which blood cells are not healthy enough to carry oxygen to the body's tissues, may occur when there is not sufficient iron in the diet.



Iron intake in young children is particularly important because the first 3 years of life are a period of rapid growth. IDA in young children is associated with long-lasting diminished mental, motor, and behavioral functioning. These diminished functions may occur even after iron deficiency has been corrected.

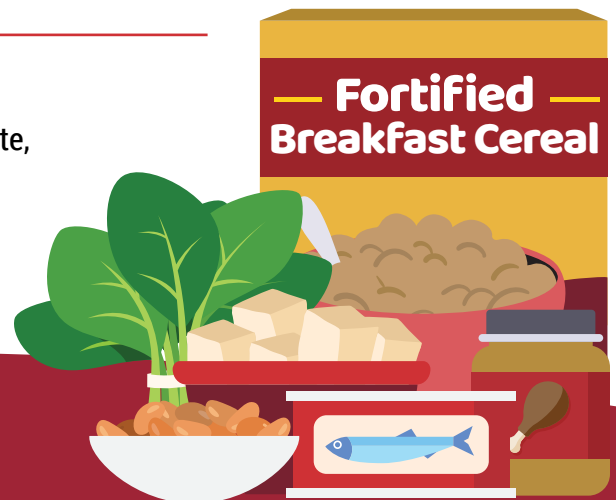


Because of the importance of iron, be sure to talk with your child's healthcare provider about whether your baby might need additional sources of iron or an iron supplement around 4–6 months of age. Once your child starts eating foods and continues to drink breast milk, be sure to offer foods that contain iron.

GET YOUR NUTRIENTS FROM YOUR WIC* FOODS!

Infant food meat, fortified baby cereal, breakfast cereal, beans (white, kidney, chickpeas), lentils, spinach, potato, tofu, and canned fish. Learn what types of fish are safe for feeding your baby at <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/advice-about-eating-fish>.

*Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)



See other foods that contain iron from <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-Consumer/>