IRON
ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR TODDLER’S WELLBEING
IRON HELPS YOUR TODDLER BY...

• Carrying oxygen to the brain and muscles
• Supporting growth and brain development
• Releasing energy from the food they eat

IF A TODDLER IS LOW IN IRON OR ‘IRON DEFICIENT’ THEY MAY SHOW SOME OF THESE SIGNS:

• Pale
• Tired
• Poor concentration
• Irritable and grumpy

But we know all toddlers can be like this from time to time. If you are worried about your toddler talk to your doctor.

If your toddler is iron deficient they need to be given iron medicine prescribed by your doctor.

TIP: New Zealand research has shown eating red meat (particularly beef) can help stop toddlers’ iron levels dropping. Replacing ordinary cow’s milk with iron fortified toddler milk can increase toddlers’ iron levels (1). If you are breastfeeding please continue, along with offering iron-rich foods.
IRON-RICH FOODS FOR YOUR TODDLER

Toddlers need to eat a variety of foods high in iron. Some foods contain iron more easily used by the body than the iron in other foods. Choose iron-rich foods from the list below.

EXCELLENT SOURCES OF IRON

• Lean beef
• Lean lamb
• Kidney
• Venison
• Liver (no more than three teaspoons once a week)
• Shellfish, for example: paua, mussels
• Iron-fortified toddler milk

TIP: The redder the meat - the higher the iron content.

GOOD SOURCES OF IRON

• Fish
• Lean chicken
• Lean pork

USEFUL SOURCES OF IRON

based on toddler-sized meals

• Baked beans
• Eggs
• Wholemeal bread
• Fruit bread
• Iron-fortified breakfast cereal
• Kidney beans
• Lentils
• Chickpeas
• Marmite® (no more than one teaspoon a day)
IMPORTANT TIPS

TEA
• Stops iron being used by the body. Do not give tea to your toddler.

COW’S MILK
• Cow’s milk is a healthy drink and most toddlers need around 500mls (2 cups) in a day.
• Drinking too much milk is filling for a toddler’s small stomach and may reduce the amount of iron-rich foods eaten.
• Give milk between or after meals so your toddler eats a variety of other foods too.

FOODS THAT HELP THE BODY USE IRON
Eating meals and snacks with a food high in vitamin C helps the body use up to 4 times more iron. Meals containing meat, chicken or fish also help the body use more iron.

FOODS HIGH IN VITAMIN C
• Oranges
• Kiwifruit
• Strawberries
• Feijoas
• Bananas
• Mandarin
• Rockmelon
• Tamarillos
• Broccolli
• Capsicum
• Cauliflower
• Tomatoes
IRON-RICH FAMILY MEALS

ALL THESE RECIPES INCLUDE FOODS HIGH IN IRON AND A FOOD CONTAINING VITAMIN C.

LASAGNE

(Serves a family of four)

- 500g lean beef mince or other meat*
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 4 Tbsp tomato paste
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 250g lasagne sheets

Sauce

- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup tasty cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 160°C. Fry mince, onion and garlic in a dry non-stick pan, stirring until brown.
Add tomato paste and canned tomatoes, and simmer for 15 minutes. Set aside.
Combine oil and flour in a medium saucepan, then gradually add milk while stirring.
Simmer until thickened, add cheese and remove from heat.
Cut the lasagne sheets to fit a greased 8 cup capacity lasagne dish.

Put one layer of lasagne on the bottom, spread over half the meat mixture and half the sauce, and repeat.
Cook in the preheated oven for 50 minutes.
Serve with your favourite vegetables or a salad.

*Alternatively use a 420g can of kidney beans or lentils (drained and rinsed).
RED LENTIL DAHL
(Serves a family of four)

- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tsp crushed garlic
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 cup red lentils
- 3 cups water
- 1 tsp lemon juice

Fry garlic and spices in oil for 2 minutes.
Add the lentils and cook for 2 minutes.
Add the water and lemon juice.
Bring to the boil then simmer for 15-20 minutes.
Serve with pita bread or chapatti.
CHOP SUEY (SAPASUII)
(Serves a family of four)

- 60g vermicelli
- ½ cup hot water
- 1 tsp oil
- 300g lean beef steak*, thinly sliced
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cups mixed vegetables
- 1 Tbsp dark soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp water

Cover the vermicelli with hot water, soak until soft, then drain.
Heating oil in a large saucepan or wok, add beef and onion, stir fry for 4-5 minutes.
Add the vermicelli, mixed vegetables, water and soy sauce to the pan.
Simmer for 5-10 minutes or until vegetables are cooked.

*Alternatively, use canned or cooked dried beans such as kidney or soy
IRON-RICH MEAL IDEAS

LUNCH

• Mini meatballs with tomato sauce
• Diced meat in vegetable soup
• Liver paté* on bread fingers and vegetable sticks
• Sardines on toast with capsicum
• Cheese and Marmite® sandwich with vegetable sticks
• Scrambled egg with wholemeal bread and orange slices
• Baked potato with baked beans and fruit slices

DINNER

• Savoury mince with broccoli
• Lasagne and salad
• Roast meat and vegetables
• Kai moana and vegetables
• Fish pie and slices of tomato
• Spaghetti Bolognese
• Spinach and broccoli frittata
• Mini burgers with falafel and salad
• Red kidney bean and vegetable stir fry

*No more than three teaspoons once a week

This resource booklet was produced as part of Julia Wilson’s University of Otago Post Graduate Diploma in Dietetics with help from the Auckland Region paediatric dietitians’ group, and parents and caregivers of children under the age of 5 years old. 01/06/08.

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Anne-Louise Heath (PhD), University of Otago Department of Human Nutrition, and Fiona Smith (NZRD), Early Childhood Health Team, Auckland District Health Board for their support and contribution.

For more information: Food and Nutrition Guidelines for healthy infants and toddlers (Aged 0-2 years), http://www.health.govt.nz


Printed with funding from Beef + Lamb New Zealand Inc. For further copies: Freephone 0800 733 466 or email enquiries@beeflambnz.co.nz

Iron deficiency anaemia cannot be treated by diet alone and requires prescribed iron supplements. If you are concerned about your toddler please visit your doctor.

Revised September 2012