

WHY DO WE NEED IRON?

Iron is a mineral that is essential for both child development and overall health. It is primarily needed to **supply the body with oxygen**, but it also is used in:

- Muscle metabolism
- Maintaining connective tissue
- Physical growth
- Nerve development
- Cell functioning

HOW MUCH IRON IS NEEDED PER DAY?

0-6 months	.27 mg	
6-12 months	11 mg	
1-3 years	7 mg	
4-8 years	10 mg	
9-13 years	8 mg	
14-18 years	11 mg for men	15 mg for women
19-50 years	8 mg for men	18 mg for women
51+ years	8 mg	



As you can see, infants age 6-12 months old, as well as children going through puberty, need iron the most to encourage healthy growth and strong bodies. Additionally, women between the ages of 14-50 years old will require more daily iron than men.

There are two types of iron found in the foods we eat. **Heme iron** is found in meats and seafoods, while **non-heme iron** is found mostly in plants. Non-heme iron does not absorb as well as heme iron, so if an individual has a vegetarian or mostly plant-based diet, aim for twice the recommended amount of iron.

HIGH-IRON FOODS



Some of the best animal-based sources of iron include:

Chicken and beef liver ~ 3.5 mg per 1 oz

Lean beef chuck ~ 1 mg per 1 oz cooked

Eggs ~ .5 mg per 1 oz

Pork loin, chicken breast, turkey, canned tuna ~ .3 mg per 1 oz cooked

Try out these plant-based options:

White beans ~ 1.8 mg per 1/4 cup cooked

Lentils, spinach~ 1.5 mg per 1/4 cup cooked

Soy beans ~ 1 mg per 1/4 cup

Tofu, pumpkin seeds~ 1 mg per 1 oz



Serving **Iron-fortified cereals** is one of the best ways to make sure children get enough iron in their day. A 1/2 oz equivalent of iron-fortified cereal usually contains between 4 and 6.5 mg of iron.



PRO TIP!

Iron is best absorbed when consumed with Vitamin C. When serving foods high in iron, try pairing them with oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, broccoli, tomatoes, strawberries, bell peppers, papaya, cantaloupe or sweet potato.



LOW-COST, HIGH-IRON RECIPES



recipe *Three-Bean Chili*

ingredients

15 oz can of Cannellini beans (white kidney)	2 tbsp olive oil
15 oz can of Great Northern beans	1 medium onion, chopped
15 oz can of garbanzo beans (chickpeas)	3 cloves garlic, minced
14.5 oz can of stewed tomatoes	1 small jalapeno, diced
1 lb 93% lean ground beef	1 1/2 tsp chili powder



Lunch/Supper Crediting:
6 Servings for ages 3-5

One serving provides
approximately 5 mg iron.

directions

Rinse beans and place in slow cooker. Heat the oil and cook onion, jalapeno and garlic until the onion turns clear. Add to slow cooker. Using the same skillet, brown the ground beef and add to slow cooker. Stir in tomatoes and chili powder. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

recipe *Tofu Spinach Stir Fry*

ingredients

3 oz whole-grain spaghetti noodles, dry	1/4 cup soy sauce, low-sodium
20 oz tofu, firm, drained	1 tsp sesame oil
Two 13.5 oz cans of spinach	1 tbsp brown sugar, packed
2 large red bell peppers	4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp canola oil	1 tbsp ginger root, minced
	1/8 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)



Lunch/Supper Crediting:
6 Servings for ages 3-5

One serving provides
approximately 4.6 mg iron.

directions

Break spaghetti noodles in half and boil until al dente, then drain. Press and drain tofu, then cut into 1/2" cubes and place in large bowl. Combine sauce ingredients, then pour over tofu and coat thoroughly. Heat oil in a nonstick pan. Sauté peppers and spinach until spinach becomes wilted, then set aside. Add tofu and marinade to skillet on medium-high heat and cook until tofu is lightly browned. Gently stir in noodles and vegetables.

recipe *Curried Lentils and Quinoa*

ingredients

1 cup green lentils, dry	1 tsp salt
1 cup quinoa, dry and rinsed	3/4 tsp garam masala
4 1/2 cups vegetable broth, low-sodium	2 tsp ground turmeric
4 cups Swiss chard, chopped	1 tsp ground cumin
1 small white onion	3/4 cup coconut milk
4 cloves garlic	2 tbsp lime juice



Lunch/Supper Crediting:
8 Servings for ages 3-5

One serving provides
approximately 3.6 mg iron.

directions

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook onion until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook 2 minutes. Stir in salt, garam masala, turmeric and cumin, and cook about 45 seconds or until fragrant. Add lentils, quinoa and broth. Bring to boil over high heat, then lower heat, cover and simmer for 25 minutes. Add chard on top and cover for 5 minutes. Stir in chard, adding coconut milk and lime juice.