

NUTRITION

Iron-Rich Foods for Babies: Why Iron Matters and Best Sources

Iron is critical for baby brain development from 6 months. Discover the best iron-rich foods for babies, how much iron they need, and tips to maximize absorption at every meal.

Key Takeaways

- A baby's iron stores begin to deplete around 6 months, making iron-rich solids a priority when starting complementary foods.
- Heme iron (from meat, poultry, and fish) is more bioavailable than non-heme iron from plants and fortified cereals.
- Pairing non-heme iron sources with vitamin C foods improves absorption.
- Cow's milk as a main drink before 12 months can reduce iron absorption and is not recommended.
- If you are concerned about iron deficiency or anemia, ask your pediatrician, who may check iron status.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do babies need iron at 6 months?

Babies are born with iron stores that begin to deplete around 6 months. Since breast milk is low in iron, iron-rich solids become important at this stage to support growth, brain development, and healthy red blood cells.

What are the best iron-rich foods for babies?

Top options include pureed or minced meat, iron-fortified infant cereal, lentils, beans, and tofu. Pair them with vitamin-C foods like fruit or vegetables to improve iron absorption.

Sources

1. Iron — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Infant and young child feeding — World Health Organization