

Iron for Your Toddler

1 to 4 years old



24 ounces in 24 hours is too much milk!

Slow down on milk to leave room for plenty of iron-rich solid foods.

It's that simple.

What is Iron Deficiency?

Iron deficiency anemia happens when your body's iron supply becomes low. In the long run, this can cause growth delays and learning and behavioral problems. The body can be slow to show these signs, so it's important to stay on top of your toddler's health. If you notice one or more of the following signs in your toddler, contact your doctor:

- Feeling extremely tired or weak
- Skin looking pale or having less color than usual
- Quick heartbeat
- Feeling easily annoyed or angry
- Decreased appetite

24 ounces in 24 hours is too much milk!

While it's true that milk has lots of important nutrients, it is also very *low in iron*. This means that if your toddler drinks too much milk (cow's milk or alternatives), s/he will feel less hungry when it's finally time to eat more nutritious, iron-rich foods. On top of that, calcium in milk products can *block* the body's ability to absorb iron.

So what's the right amount of milk for your 1 to 4 year old? 16 to 20 ounces (about 2 cups) per day. Between ages 1 to 2 years, your child should drink whole milk. After age 2, your child should switch to 1% or non-fat milk.

Age	Daily Recommended Amount of Iron**
1-3 years	7 mg/day
4 years	10 mg/day

How Much Iron is Enough?

Use the table on the left to understand how much iron your toddler needs each day and the food list on the back for ways to add iron to meals.

If your toddler has iron deficiency, s/he may need an iron supplement. An iron supplement can help your child make red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body, to optimize their growth and development.

*Kaiser Permanente Health offers Feeding Your Toddler classes **at no fee** to members. \$30 for non-members. For more information, please call Health Education at 415-833-3450.*

(REV. 10-16)

San Francisco Health Education Department

What are the Best Sources of Iron?

Iron can come from a variety of foods—from leafy green vegetables and beans, to lean meats and seafood. Use the table (ranking iron-rich foods from highest to lowest) and visuals below to make sure your toddler is getting just the right amount.

Plant Sources* (1/2 cup)	Iron (Milligrams)
Baby Cereal	9.5
Fortified Oatmeal	5.8
White Beans; Lentils	3.4
Spinach	3.2
Kidney Beans	2.6
Chick Peas	2.4
Chard	2.0
Black Beans	1.8
Quinoa; Tofu; Sweet Potato	1.4
Green Peas	1.2
Pumpkin Seeds; Barley; Fortified Pasta	1.0
Whole Wheat Bread (1/2 slice)	0.8
Kale; Broccoli	0.6

Animal Sources* (1 oz)	Iron (Milligrams)
Chicken Liver	3.7
Beef Liver	2.0
Sardines; Ground Beef	0.8
Dark Meat Turkey	0.7
Egg (1 Large)	0.5
Chicken Thigh; Salmon	0.3

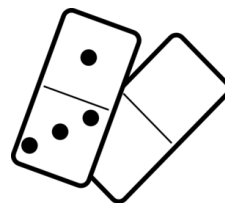
*All sources are cooked, boiled, or roasted without salt; USDA National Nutrient Database

**Dietary recommendations from National Institute of Health (NIH).

So, How Much Is That?



1/2 cup
of plant
sources = Palm of hand



1 oz.
of animal
sources = 2 dominos

Quick Tips for Increasing Iron

- ⇒ Add a source of vitamin C to your toddler's iron-rich meal to increase absorption: potato, orange, strawberry, tomato, broccoli, bell pepper, spinach, peach, pineapple, and mango.
- ⇒ Avoid calcium-rich foods (milk, yogurt, and cheese) with iron-rich meals because calcium can interfere with iron absorption. Instead, save calcium-rich foods for snacks.
- ⇒ Grind pumpkin seeds and add to any dish! (Sprinkle in purees, cereal, pasta, salad, etc. for an iron boost.)
- ⇒ Get creative and add baby cereal to pancake mix and muffin batter!
- ⇒ Offer iron-fortified cereals, breads, pastas, and crackers.

Sample Meals for Your Toddler

- ⇒ Cheap, quick, and easy breakfast? Scramble some eggs with spinach and serve strawberries on the side!
- ⇒ Hungry for dinner? Make whole wheat pasta with white beans, chopped chard, lean ground beef, and tomato sauce.
- ⇒ Vegetarian side dish? Try quinoa (it cooks just like rice!), tofu, baked sweet potato fries, and broccoli.
- ⇒ Gluten-free? Lentils, brown rice, and chopped red bell peppers is your new go-to!