

For toddlers and older children iron fortified infant cereals can still be used mixed with other cereals and fruit.

The National Health & Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents recommend specifically that children 'eat foods containing iron'<sup>(1)</sup>.

*A healthy diet rich in iron is important to prevent and treat iron deficiency.*



For personal advice on feeding baby, talk to your child health nurse. General information on baby feeding is available on [www.heinzforbaby.com.au](http://www.heinzforbaby.com.au)

For information on HEINZ\* Baby Foods call the HEINZ\* Baby Product Info-line 1800 633 333

This information has been written and produced by the Infant Feeding Advisory Service for H.J. Heinz Company Australia Limited. Locked Bag 57, Hawthorn 3122, Australia.



1. Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents. NH&MRC 2003

2. Fomon. S. Nutrition of Normal Infants. P 247

3. Oti- Boateng et al. Iron status and dietary iron intake of 6 – 24 month old children in Adelaide. Journal Pediatrics and Child Health June 1998:252

4. Boy or Girl? For the sake of simplicity we have used 'he' or 'him' in reference to the baby and 'she' and 'her' for the mother

5. NH&MRC . Recommended Dietary intake of iron for babies 0–6 months: Breastfed = 0.5mg of iron per day.

Bottlefed = 3.0mg of iron per day, 7–12 months = 9mg per day

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# What parents must know about Iron

## What is iron?

Iron is an essential mineral that babies need so that they can grow and develop normally. It is found in every cell in the body and helps to carry oxygen in the blood stream to all parts of the body. Iron is an important part of energy metabolism and is necessary for the immune system.

## Why your baby needs iron

Your baby needs iron for healthy blood and for developing brain cells.<sup>(1)</sup> Without enough iron, babies become tired and irritable and prone to infection. Studies have shown that severe iron deficiency in babies may cause long term problems which could cause learning difficulties later on at school.<sup>(2)</sup>

Your baby is born with a natural store of iron. This iron store begins to deplete around 6 months of age, so more iron is needed. At this time in your baby's life the main source of iron is breast milk or formula.

To 'top up' your baby's iron supply you can add some HEINZ\* Iron Enriched Rice Cereal.

You need to discuss with your child health nurse as to the best time to do this (see 'When it's time to eat').

As your baby grows, make sure that you include iron rich foods every day.



[www.heinzforbaby.com.au](http://www.heinzforbaby.com.au)

Did you know?  
That many Australian babies over the age of 6 months are iron deficient.<sup>(3)</sup>  
and  
That your baby needs more iron each day than his<sup>(4)</sup> father<sup>(5)</sup>?

### Effects of iron deficiency

- iron deficiency anaemia
- increased susceptibility to infection
- poor learning skills
- poor physical development
- poor growth.

### Causes of iron deficiency

Inadequate intake of iron can be caused by:

- delayed introduction of iron rich foods
- cow's milk given instead of breast milk or formula. Cow's milk is a poor source of iron and can cause bleeding from the bowel in some babies with immature digestive systems
- high fibre diets as fibre 'binds' with iron and can prevent its absorption
- gastroenteritis and other infections and illnesses
- bleeding resulting in a large blood loss.

### Danger times

**0 to 6 months** – iron is stored in the baby's liver during the last 6 weeks of pregnancy so premature and low birth weight babies are at risk of iron deficiency

**6–12 months** – foods that are high in iron are needed every day

**Toddlers and preschoolers** – growth has slowed down but iron is still very important and high iron foods are needed every day.

*Problems can occur as a result of poor food intake such as when a child drinks too much milk or fruit juice. Ask your child health nurse for advice.*

### Make sure that your baby has plenty of iron rich foods everyday

Iron is better absorbed when Vitamin C is present, so feed your baby or young child meat (iron rich) with vegetables (Vitamin C). HEINZ\* Iron Enriched Cereals have added Vitamin C.

Breast feed or use an infant formula for at least the first 12 months of baby's life. The iron in breast milk is very well absorbed and formula is made with added iron and Vitamin C.

Avoid cow's milk as baby's main milk drink until after 12 months. Cow's milk is low in iron and Vitamin C. Small amounts of cow's milk, as part of solids, can be given from 6 months. Eg. in custards or mixed with cereal.

Introduce solids around 6 months (but not before 4 months) to suit baby's developmental milestones and include foods high in iron. HEINZ\* Iron Enriched Rice Cereal, can be mixed with baby's milk when solids are needed.

Offer your baby HEINZ\* Iron Enriched Cereals until at least 12 months. As well as offering cereals to your baby at breakfast time, stir in dry iron enriched cereals to other foods such as fruit, vegetables and yoghurt.

Meat is one of the best sources of iron. Offer it pureed from 6 months and finely chopped or as a finger food for older babies.