

Children need iron to carry oxygen in the blood, and it is also important for growth, brain development and a healthy immune system. Without enough iron, your child may suffer fatigue and irritability.

Children need around 2 'child' serves of lean meat each day to ensure adequate iron. For children in full-time care (8 hours or more per day), this means you should pack at least 1 'child' serve of iron rich food to meet half their daily needs of iron while in care.

Iron rich food ideas for the lunch box are:

**1 serve =**

- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or 45g of red meat (eg mince, beef, lamb, kangaroo) *or*
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or 45g of poultry (chicken, turkey) *or*
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or 45g of fish *or*
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or 45g of cold lean meats (eg lean ham, lean bacon)

### What if my child won't eat meat?

Many children refuse to eat red meat and chicken because they find it hard to chew them.

*If your child won't eat meat, you can try:*

- Providing soft meat meals such as casseroles and curries which are easier to manage
- Having mince meals which are popular with children – bolognaise pasta sauces, meatballs, burgers and Shepherds Pie
- Using different types of meat and fish, eg beef, pork, lamb, chicken and tuna

Vegetarian children can get adequate iron from their meals by combining plant-based iron containing foods with foods rich in Vitamin C. Foods containing vitamin C will increase the absorption of iron.



### Plant based iron containing foods

Beans and lentils  
*(eg baked beans, lentils, kidney beans)*  
Wholemeal/wholegrain pasta, bread, rice  
Iron fortified breakfast cereals  
Eggs  
Tofu  
Peanut paste and seeds

### Foods rich in Vitamin C

Capsicum  
Broccoli  
Kiwifruit  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Tomato  
Peas  
Oranges, strawberries, rockmelon

### For a vegetarian meal with iron, try offering:

- Sliced egg and tomato in a wholemeal sandwich
- Peanut paste sandwich and an orange
- Lentil and vegetable soup
- Baked beans on wholemeal toast
- Stir-fry tofu and vegetables with rice
- Iron fortified breakfast cereal with sliced strawberries on top



Written by  
Accredited Practising Dietitians,  
Family Day Care



Produced by  
Noarlunga Health Services  
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