

# IRON

FOR CAUTIOUS EATERS



# Emily Caroline Nutrition



## Iron for cautious eaters

As a parent, our role is to offer a range of iron rich foods regularly. We cannot 'get' the children to eat them. We can be a good role model & continue to serve a range of different foods.

Iron is a vital mineral that plays a crucial role in your child's overall health and well-being. This leaflet aims to provide you with practical suggestions on how to include iron-rich foods and snacks in your child's diet, helping you navigate the challenges of picky eating. By following these tips and incorporating the provided sample meal ideas, you can support your child's iron intake and make mealtimes a little less stressful.





# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF IRON

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Our body needs iron for muscle development during growth and to transport oxygen in healthy blood.

Iron deficiency results in reduced haemoglobin in red blood cells. Haemoglobin is a protein that transports oxygen around the body. People with mild iron deficiency may look pale, and often feel tired and lacking in energy.

Iron plays a key role in maintaining a healthy immune system. If you have a deficiency, you could be more susceptible to infections. Severe iron deficiency is called iron deficiency anaemia.

Children, especially toddlers and adolescents, are at an increased risk of iron deficiency due to their rapid growth. Iron-rich foods should be incorporated into their meals and snacks regularly.



# VARIETY

Offer a variety of iron-rich foods: Provide a range of iron sources to increase the chances of your child accepting them. This includes both animal-based and plant-based options. Offer small portions to start with, tiny tastes or serve family style in the middle of the table.

Animal sources: Red meats (beef, lamb, pork). Fish and chicken contain some iron.

Plant sources: Beans, lentils, tofu, fortified breakfast cereals, spinach, broccoli, quinoa, nuts and seeds







# 02

## COMBINE

Combine iron with vitamin C:  
Enhance iron absorption by pairing it with vitamin C-rich foods.

- Serve citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes, or peppers alongside iron-rich meals or snacks.

Serve plant based iron with animal based iron to boost the absorption of the plant based iron.

- Add a tin of butter beans, chickpeas or other pulses to beef dishes eg Bolognese, beef casserole, beef stir-fry

Avoid excessive dairy consumption.

Milk is very filling and can reduce the appetite for iron rich meals.

Offer 2-3 small portions of dairy per day for children aged over 1.

A portion of dairy is 100-120ml milk, 3 tbsp yoghurt, 2-4 tbsp grated cheese.



# 03

## SERVE REGULARLY WITHOUT PRESSURE

Introduce new iron-rich foods gradually, offering them alongside familiar foods.

Make sure they are offered regularly with no pressure to eat.

Offer iron rich foods that you enjoy and eat them yourself without comment.



# General tips

- **Involve your child in meal preparation:** Invite your child in making recipes, grocery shopping, and preparing meals. By involving them in the process, they may feel more inclined to try new foods and develop a sense of ownership over their meals.
- **Make meals visually appealing:** Children are often drawn to colourful and visually appealing foods. Try to incorporate a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables in their meals to make them more enticing.
- **Serve iron-rich foods in different forms:** If your child rejects certain iron-rich foods, don't give up! Continue to offer without pressure to eat. Try presenting them in different forms or preparations. For example, if they dislike plain cooked spinach, you can try adding baby spinach leaves alongside a sandwich or incorporating it into a pasta sauce.





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- Use dips and sauces: Introduce dips and sauces to make iron-rich foods more enjoyable. Hummus, guacamole, or yogurt-based dressings can add flavour and encourage your child to eat vegetables, meats, or whole grains that contain iron.
- Be a role model: Children often mimic the eating behaviours of their parents or caregivers. Set a good example by enjoying a wide variety of nutritious foods yourself. Encourage family meals and make them a positive and enjoyable experience.



# Meal & snack ideas

- Broccoli fritters with dip
- Beans on toast with tomatoes
- Ready Brek/ own brand with dried fruit
- Ready Brek pancakes with fruit
- Weetabix/ own brand with dried fruit
- Hummus with peppers and cucumber
- Peanut butter dip with fruit
- Peanut butter on oatcakes with fruit
- Beef slow cooker with chickpeas
- Beef bolognese with added butterbeans
- Spinach & cheese muffins
- Add chia seeds to overnight oats
- Tin mixed beans mashed with mayo on toast plus salad
- Dried apricots with yoghurt and seeds
- Figs with cheese & salad sandwich
- Add a small handful almonds to meals or snacks
- Use ground almonds in baking
- Peanut butter and banana smoothie





**REMEMBER**

## **WE "SHOW NOT TELL" ABOUT NUTRITION**

Iron is a really important nutrient to include regularly. We cannot 'get' the children to eat the iron rich foods. We must serve them regularly and give them the opportunity to learn to like them, gradually, over time.

Children learn best by seeing iron rich foods show up regularly. We don't need to explain the benefits to them because 'health' is not a good motivator for children. It's too abstract a concept when they are small.





## THANK YOU

for reading this ebook all about iron. I hope it has given you some food for thought (pun intended!) and that you now are more confident in what and how to offer iron rich foods for your own child/ren.

Variety is the key to eating well- there are no good or bad foods. It's all about how often we as parents offer different foods to our children.

Do let me know if you have any questions as I love to chat!

For further support please check out my range of services including 1-2-1 nutrition clinic appointments.

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