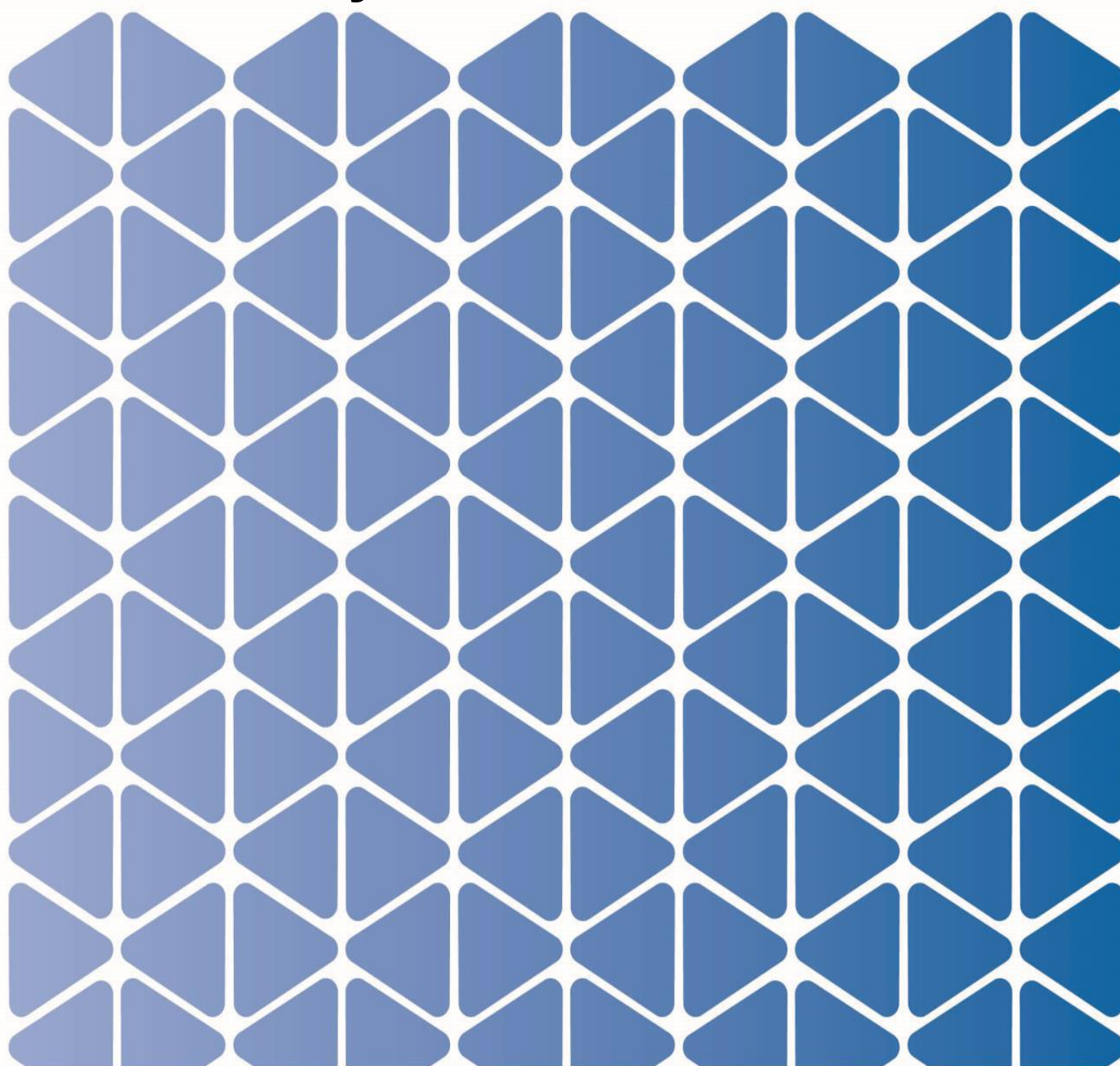


PATIENT INFORMATION

Iron in your child's diet

Advice for increasing iron rich food in your child's diet



Why is iron important?

Iron is a key ingredient for making healthy red blood cells which carry oxygen around the body. It is not uncommon for children, particularly toddlers to become low in iron. This is known as iron deficiency anaemia and can result in feeling tired, lacking energy, sometimes feeling dizzy and a lack of appetite.



What can be done about low iron?

If iron levels are very low on a blood test then it may be recommended that an iron supplement is prescribed for 8 weeks or more. Your doctor may also request a repeat blood test to check the iron levels are back to normal.

It is important to make sure the diet contains good sources of iron so that iron levels do not fall again in the future.

Avoid taking calcium and iron supplements at the same time, as calcium will affect the absorption of iron. Take the iron supplements with meals and the calcium supplement between meals or at bedtime (only if these have been prescribed).

Iron requirements for children

Babies are usually born with a good store of iron to last them until about 6 months of age. Breast milk and standard infant formula will provide enough iron for the first six months of a baby's life however, after that iron rich foods need to be included when weaning.

Dietary reference values for iron in children

Age	Iron requirement (mg)
7-12 months	7.8mg/day
1-3 years	6.9mg/day
4-6 years	6.1mg/day
7-10 years	8.7mg/day
11-18 years (boy)	11.3mg/day
11-18 years (girl)	14.8mg/day

What are the best food sources of iron?

There are 2 types of iron in food– **haem** and **non-haem** iron. These are absorbed differently by the body. The haem sources are absorbed much more easily.

Haem iron is found in meat such as chicken, fish, beef, pork, liver. Red meat e.g. beef and lamb contain three times as much iron compared to fish and chicken.

Non-haem iron is found in plant foods such as grains, vegetables, tofu, beans, leafy green vegetables, nuts and eggs, as well as iron-fortified cereals.

Top Tips:

- ⇒ Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) can help non-haem iron be absorbed.
- ⇒ Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamin C such as oranges/orange juice, kiwi, blueberries, raspberries, tomatoes, green peppers, broccoli etc.
- ⇒ Fruit juice - limit to one glass per day only.



Foods and drinks to reduce/avoid

- ⇒ Do not offer your child tea to drink with meals or snacks as it reduces iron absorption in the body.
- ⇒ Do not offer cow's milk as a drink in babies under a year of age as it is low in iron.
- ⇒ Unprocessed bran, high bran bread and bran rich cereals contain substances that reduce the absorption of iron in the body, these should be kept to a minimum or be avoided.

Encourage a varied diet - eating a variety of foods will help children and young people get enough iron in their diet.

Good haem sources of iron:

- Red meats such as beef, lamb and pork
- Chicken or turkey, particularly dark meat from legs and thighs
- Oily fish - sardines, pilchards and salmon
- Liver is a good source but limit to one portion per week due to the high vitamin A content

Good non-haem sources of iron:

These are absorbed better when eaten with foods rich in vitamin C.

Aim to give 3-4 helpings of iron containing foods a day.



- **Bread:** especially wholemeal and granary.
- **Pulses, Vegetables:** e.g. peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas or hummus, baked beans and tofu.
- **Eggs:** there is no limit on the number of eggs you can consume as part of a healthy diet.
- **Green Vegetables:** e.g. spinach, watercress, curly kale, broccoli, spring greens, runner beans and broad beans.
- **Fortified Breakfast cereals:** e.g. Weetabix, Readybrek, Cheerios, Shreddies (check labels for products fortified with iron).
- **Dried Fruit:** e.g. apricots, figs, prunes, raisins, sultanas, currants and dates.
- **Nuts and seeds:** e.g. all nuts, seeds and peanut butter. Do not give whole nuts to babies or children under 5 years of age due to the risk of choking.
- **Vegetable Protein:** e.g. tofu, bean curd and soya beans.

Meal and snack ideas rich in iron

Breakfast ideas

- Fortified breakfast cereal with a glass of fruit juice
- Baked Beans on wholemeal or granary toast
- Boiled egg/scrambled egg with wholemeal bread fingers followed with a piece of fruit

Light meal ideas

- Sardines / pilchards / egg on toast with tomatoes
- Baked potato with chilli beef/vegetarian chilli or beans
- Egg/peanut butter/tuna or cold meat sandwich
- Broccoli quiche with salad and wholemeal bread with a glass of fruit juice
- Baked beans on toast and slices of red pepper
- Hummus with pitta bread and carrot sticks

Main meal ideas

- Vegetable and bean or lentil curry
- Roast lamb, beef or nut roast with green leafy vegetables and potatoes.
- Shepherds pie (can make with vegetarian mince)
- Ham, tomato and cheese omelette
- Beef and vegetable stir fry with rice
- Fish (salmon/tuna) with vegetables and potatoes/rice
- Meat or soya mince fajitas with peppers

Desserts ideas:

- Fruit based pudding, e.g. fruit crumble
- Milk pudding with dried fruit
- Fresh fruit and yoghurt

Snacks:

- Fruit (fresh or dried)
- Fruit cake or malt loaf
- Cereal bars with fruit
- Sliced well cooked egg
- Hummus with sliced pepper/cucumber

What about milk?

At one year of age three 120mls (4oz) cups of milk a day is usually enough for their calcium needs. Other sources of dairy can be offered such as cheese and yoghurts.



Follow on and growing up milks are fortified with iron. These can be given after 6 months of age if you are worried about your child not eating enough iron rich foods.

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If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.