

# Keeping Iron Intake in Check: Tips from a Dietitian Mom of Toddler Twins

April Rudat, MS Ed, RD, LDN

---

It is not uncommon for children between the ages of one and three to become iron deficient. The dietitian's trick: Provide your kids with many good sources of iron and do what you can to help the iron get absorbed!

## Iron Sources and Serving Suggestions:

- Animal sources: poultry, meats, eggs, liver, fish, seafood
- Consult your pediatrician for guidelines on egg and fish introduction. Some pediatricians recommend introducing eggs as late as age two and fish as late as age three. See [Introduction to Solids](#)
- Keep texture in mind. Roast beef, steak, pork, or hamburger may be too hard to chew for some children.
- Cooking methods matter! Keep food moist by cooking slowly or in liquid, and be sure to cut into small pieces.
- Meatballs, moist meatloaf, and soft turkey or chicken "bites" are great! See [Infant and Toddler Recipes/Meal Ideas](#)
- Head to the deli! Order reduced sodium lunchmeats, sliced thick. Before serving, microwave until steaming to reduce the risk of listeria contamination, and cut these into fun squares.
- Don't feel like you have to succumb to fast food, hot dogs (a choking hazard in infants and toddlers), or other convenience kids' meals. These foods are not kid-friendly since they typically have too much salt, fat, and trans fat.
- Beans/legumes are good iron sources! For a quick meal, rinse canned beans and serve in soft tacos with melted cheddar cheese or guacamole. For little ones, cut the folded-over taco into small pieces.
- For another easy iron-rich snack, spread hummus on sliced pita.
- Dark green veggies have iron! Top them with a little butter, non-hydrogenated margarine or parmesan and serve.
- Many grain foods are fortified with iron. One example of a grain iron source is commercial infant cereal.
- You don't need to stop using infant cereals when your babies turn one.
- Or use instant oatmeal, which is fortified with iron. When compared to old-fashioned oats, instant oats have added iron and added sodium. Look for the lowest sodium variety when possible.



### Getting the Iron Absorbed:

- Add vitamin C foods like: citrus, pineapple, kiwi, melon, or greens to iron-rich meals!
- Give water with iron-rich meals rather than milk, which can be served in between.
- If the child refuses iron-rich foods, try different cooking methods and don't give up. It may take many "tries" before a food is accepted!

April Rudat, MS Ed, RD, LDN is a dietitian mom of toddler twins and works in private practice. April is also publishing a book, [Oh Yes You Can Breastfeed Twins](#). Visit April's website at [www.ohyesyoucanbreastfeedtwins.com](http://www.ohyesyoucanbreastfeedtwins.com).

