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Iron deficiency in children

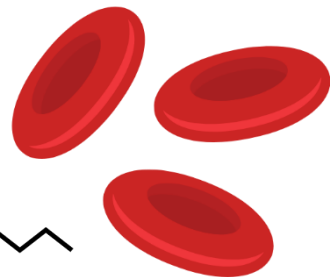


What is iron deficiency ?

Iron is an important nutrient necessary for your child's growth and development. Iron helps form **hemoglobin**, which **transports oxygen** from the lungs to the rest of the body and helps muscles store and use oxygen. If your child's diet lacks iron, he may develop a condition called **iron deficiency** or **iron deficiency anemia** .



Iron deficiency is a common problem in children, which can occur in different **degrees** ranging from a mild deficiency to iron deficiency anemia - a condition in which the blood **does not contain** enough **healthy red blood cells**.





Children most at risk of iron deficiency?

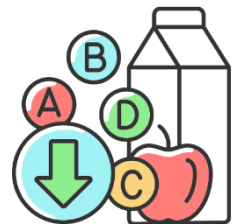
- **Premature babies** (born prematurely) or those with low birth weight.
- Children who started drinking **cow's or goat's milk** before the age of **one year**.
- Infants who are still breastfed, especially after the age of 6 months, and who have **not been given** complementary foods that **contain iron**.
- Children **excessively** drink fresh cow's milk, exceeding **700 ml per day**.





Children most at risk of iron deficiency?

- Children who have been exposed to lead.
- Children who do **not eat** enough iron-rich foods to meet their **daily needs**.
- **Adolescent girls** are also more likely to suffer from iron deficiency because their bodies lose an amount of blood during menstruation, as 70% of the iron stores are present in the blood.





What are the Symptoms and signs of iron deficiency in children?

As previously mentioned, iron deficiency passes through stages:

The **first** is that iron decreases from storage places such as **muscles** and others.

The **second** is that the level of iron in the **blood** decreases (when conducting analyzes).

In **these two stages**, there are no symptoms indicating iron deficiency.





What are the Symptoms and signs of iron deficiency in children?

The **third** stage, which is called **iron deficiency anemia**, in which symptoms begin to appear, which include the following:

- Paleness of the face, hands, and the rest of the body.
- Lethargy and exhaustion, especially after a little effort.
- Cold hands and feet.
- Poor appetite.
- Tachycardia sometimes.
- Cravings for non-food items, such as ice, sand, paint or starch.
- Hair loss.
- Poor concentration and decline in school performance, which occur in the **late stages** of the disease.





Note:

When any of the mentioned symptoms occur, especially if your child is in the **category prone** to iron deficiency, you should go to the specialist doctor to do the necessary.





What are the Steps that you can take to avoid iron deficiency?

- When you start introducing **solid** foods to your baby, give your baby **iron-containing** foods, such as iron-fortified baby cereals, pureed meats, and mashed beans.
- For **older children**, their meals must include red meat, chicken, fish, beans and spinach, as these foods are very **rich in iron**. Add to that fruits rich in vitamin C such as oranges and other citrus fruits, as well as melons, strawberries, sweet peppers, tomatoes and dark green vegetables, as its presence **helps The stomach absorbs more iron**.





What are the Steps that you can take to avoid iron deficiency?

- Do not drink excessive milk, especially for children between the ages of two and five years. Do not allow your child to drink more than 700 milliliters of fresh milk per day.





Note:

- Regarding **mature infants**. If you are breastfeeding your baby, start giving him an iron supplement at **6 months** of age. Continue to give your child the supplement until he or she eats two or more servings a day of iron-rich foods, such as iron-fortified cereals or pureed meats.
- If you give your child **iron-fortified milk** and most of his meals are fortified milk for his age group, **stop** giving your child the **supplement**.
- With regard to **premature babies**. An iron supplement must be given from the age of **two weeks until the age of one year**.



Sources and references:

All pictures used from Canva.com

Review and audit:

The content of this booklet has been reviewed by consultants of
hematologists at King Fahd University Hospital.

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