Mississippi State Department of Health

WIC — Women, Infants & Children Program

Strong as Iron

Iron in the blood carries oxygen to all parts of the body, including the brain. Everyone needs iron, especially pregnant women, infants and children.

Infants and children need iron to:

- support rapid growth
- replace iron the body uses
- have enough energy to learn and play

Mothers, babies and children who have low iron levels

- get sick more often
- have less energy
- have poorer appetites

Where To Get Iron

Iron comes from the foods you eat.

The best iron-rich foods for babies include:

- breastmilk
- iron-fortified formula
- iron-fortified baby cereal
- strained, lean meat

Good sources of iron for moms and children are:

- lean red meats like beef and pork
- iron-enriched breads and cereals
- cooked beans (black, kidney, lima, pinto, navy)
- dark green leafy vegetables (mustard, collard, kale, turnip, and spinach)

Tea Can Cause Low Iron

Some foods and drinks keep your body from using iron. If your iron is low, you may want to avoid eating or drinking:

- tea
- cola beverages
- coffee
- too much chocolate

Don't Eat Non-foods

Some items that aren't foods will keep your body from using the iron for the foods you eat. Avoid eating:

- ice
- clay
- flour
- starch
- dirt

The body uses iron from meat and chicken better than iron from beans, grain products, and other foods. However, vitamin C helps the body use iron. The foods you serve your family make a difference. Try these high iron combos:

Foods with iron	+	Foods with vitamin C
WIC Breakfast cereal	and	berries or WIC juice
Peanut butter sandwich	and	tangerine slices
Kidney beans in chili	with	tomato sauce
Hard-boiled eggs	and	melon slices or WIC orange juice
Chicken and rice stir fry	with	bell peppers

Sickle Cell Anemia

People with sickle cell anemia need iron too. Iron will not prevent sickle cell anemia, but normal growth and development depend on iron. Foods rich in iron are good for people with sickle cell anemia.

Lead Poisoning

Iron is important in preventing lead poisoning. Iron stops the blood from carrying lead in the body. Too much lead in the body will keep infants and children from growing strong. Lead also harms pregnant and breastfeeding women and their babies. To decrease lead absorption, eat a low fat diet rich in calcium, iron and vitamin C.

The WIC package provides iron-rich foods that keep blood strong.

Helpful Hints

- The iron in vegetables is absorbed better when eaten with meat.
- The iron absorption of all foods is improved when eaten with foods high in vitamin C. Foods high in vitamin C include oranges, lemons, grapefruits, tangerines, tomatoes, potatoes, kiwi fruit, cabbage, pineapple, strawberries, greens, cantaloupe and peppers.
- Iron-fortified infant cereal can be added to meat patties or meat loaf to add extra iron.
- If you or your child is prescribed iron, be sure it is taken daily. Taking iron with fruit juice increases the body's iron absorption. Do not take iron with tea or colas.

MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

www.HealthyMS.com

1-866-HLTHY4U (1-866-458-4948)

MISSISSIPPI WIC Women, Infants and Children

Loving support makes breastfeeding work

To learn more about WIC, call your local WIC clinic or **1-800-545-6747**.

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