

Iron Deficiency in Toddlers

OSCAR Hospitality's Lead Dietitian, Julie Taylor, advises that iron deficiency anaemia is the most common nutritional deficiency in childhood. Iron is an important dietary mineral that is involved in numerous bodily functions, primarily the transport of oxygen in the bloodstream and brain development.

Toddlers are at a higher risk of iron deficiency due to an increased need during rapid growth phases. A child who does not meet their iron requirements will eventually develop iron deficiency anaemia.

Symptoms of iron deficiency in toddlers include:

- Behavioural problems
- Recurrent infections
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Breathlessness
- Reduced growth rates

Causes of iron deficiency in toddlers include:

- Prematurity and low birth weight
- Delayed introduction of solids
- Large consumption of cow's milk as this can displace other important nutrients
- Low or no meat intake
- Gastrointestinal diseases

So how do you help prevent iron deficiency anaemia in children?

- Include lean red meat three to four times a week + regularly provide poultry and fish



- Offer vegetarian sources of iron such as lentils, beans, chickpeas, iron-fortified cereals, green leafy vegetables, nuts and nut butters – it is important to provide a source of vitamin C with vegetarian sources of iron to help maximise absorption. This can be done by including red capsicum, tomatoes, broccoli, cabbage, kiwi fruit, berries, oranges or potatoes as part of a balanced meal. Or by providing vitamin C-rich fruit for dessert e.g. a piece of fruit
- Encourage solid foods at mealtimes, rather than drinks – a toddler should consume no more than 500ml milk a day
- Chronic diarrhoea can deplete a child's store of iron. In such cases please seek immediate medical assistance
- It is important not to self-diagnose a child with iron deficiency anaemia. The only hard and fast method of diagnosis is through a blood test at the local GP



Need to establish a plan to ensure a child's iron and other nutrient requirements are met?

To consult with OSCAR Hospitality's Lead Dietitian, Julie Taylor, please call or email via our contact details below.

