PREVENTING IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

Iron is an essential nutrient in your child’s diet that is important for normal growth and development. Iron is necessary to form hemoglobin, a component in red blood cells that is used to transport oxygen throughout the body. Without adequate iron in the diet, your child can become iron deficient and develop anemia. Symptoms of anemia include weakness, fatigue, pale skin, headaches, and dizziness.

How much iron do children need daily?

| Ages 1-3 | The Recommended Daily Allowance of iron for children: 7 mg of iron per day |
| Ages 4-8 | The Recommended Daily Allowance of iron for children: 10 mg of iron per day |

What foods in the diet provide the most iron?

Iron in the diet can come from both animal (heme iron) and plant (non-heme iron) sources. Our bodies can absorb iron from animal sources two to three times better than iron from plant sources.

TIPS FOR ENHANCING IRON ABSORPTION

1. Consume plant sources of iron with animal sources of iron, as this will improve absorption. For example, try making chili with beans and lean meat or chicken with rice and spinach.
2. Combine plant sources of iron with foods that are rich in Vitamin C, such as orange juice, strawberries, melon, broccoli, and tomatoes. For example, add strawberries to breakfast cereal, drink orange juice with beans and rice, and add tomatoes and spinach to a turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread.

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1. Ensure that your child eats a balanced diet that contains a variety of lean meats, seafood, whole grains, beans, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.
2. Drinking large amounts of milk can increase the risk of iron deficiency in young children. Overconsumption of milk (more than 3 cups per day) can result in children becoming full on milk and eating less iron-rich foods rich that are needed in the diet. The calcium in milk can also reduce iron absorption, so have your child avoid drinking milk with iron-rich foods.

REFERENCES:

National Institutes of Health

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/wellness/preventing-illness/iron-deficiency