

Anemia: Iron Deficiency Type

Definition

- Anemia means that your child doesn't have enough red blood cells
- Red blood cells carry oxygen in the blood stream
- Oxygen is needed by every cell in the body to function normally

Health Information

Symptoms

- Pale skin, nailbeds and gums
- Low energy and tires easily
- Short of breath with exercise
- More irritable than normal
- Severe anemia can cause dizziness or even fainting

Cause

- Iron deficiency anemia is caused by a child not getting enough iron from their diet.
- Drinking too much milk is a common cause. Reason: no iron in milk.
- Iron is needed for your child's body to make red blood cells. Iron also is essential for your child's mental development.
- Iron deficiency anemia can also be caused by blood loss.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Anemia is diagnosed with a simple blood test.
- Iron deficiency is the most common type of anemia.
- It usually occurs in children 1 to 3 years old.
- It's easy to treat with iron supplements.

2. Iron Medicine by Mouth:

- Your child needs to take the iron medicine prescribed by your doctor.
- It needs to be taken for 2 to 3 months. Reason: to get the red blood cells back to a normal count.
- For children who dislike taking iron drops, mix them in their favorite fruit juice.
- Don't mix the iron with milk or formula. Reason: milk reduces absorption of iron.
- Iron medicines can sometimes cause an upset stomach. Take it with food to keep this from happening.
- Liquid iron medicines can stain the teeth. If this happens, brush your child's teeth with baking soda. Prevent by mixing the iron drops with orange juice.
- The iron may change the color of your child's poop to greenish black. This is harmless. Caution: Too much iron can cause poisoning. Treat iron like any medicine: Keep it out of your child's reach.

3. **Eat an Iron-Rich Diet:**

- If your child's diet is well-balanced, they should not get anemia again. Serve more of the following foods that contain iron:
- Red meats, fish and poultry are the best source. They contain iron that is more easily absorbed than iron from plants.
- Iron enriched cereals and breads. (check the label to be sure)
- Sweet potatoes, lima beans, kidney beans, chili beans, pinto beans, green peas and peanut butter. After age 4, raisins and dried fruits are safe.
- Egg yolks contain iron. But the body doesn't absorb it as well as the iron in other foods.

4. **Avoid Too Much Milk:**

- After 1 year of age, limit milk to 16 ounces per day (about 2 glasses).
- Reason: Milk doesn't have iron in it. Too much milk will also make your child feel full and less likely to eat enough iron-rich foods.
- If they are still on a bottle, discontinue it. Other option: only allow water in the bottle.

5. **Prevention: Iron Rich Baby Foods:**

- Most infant formulas contain the daily requirement of iron during the first year..
- Breast milk and cow's milk do not contain iron.
- To prevent iron deficiency, start baby foods at 6 months.
- Baby foods high in iron are sweet potato, beans, meats.

6. **Keep Follow-up Visits:**

- Your doctor needs to see your child in 1 to 2 weeks. Reason: to be sure the number of red blood cells is going up.
- Your doctor needs to see your child again in 2 months. Reason: to be sure the anemia is gone.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child won't take the iron medicine
- You have other concerns or questions

Pediatric Care Advice

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