

Iron Deficiency Anemia in a Child with Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a disease that occurs when problems with the immune system cause the body's defenses to target healthy cells in the digestive tract. This leads to upset in the digestive tract causing red and swollen areas in the body, called inflammation. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are types of IBD.

Anemia is a common problem that can occur with IBD. Anemia is when there is not enough hemoglobin in the body. Just like a mailman who delivers mail to your home, hemoglobin's job is to deliver oxygen to parts of the body. Iron helps the body make hemoglobin. Children with IBD are at risk for anemia because of blood loss and inflammation in the digestive tract that block iron absorption. This is called iron deficiency anemia.

Iron deficiency anemia occurs when there is not enough iron in the blood. In IBD, this can be caused by:

- Inflammation
- Blood loss
- Not eating enough iron-rich food
- Problems with taking in iron from food

Symptoms of iron deficiency anemia can include:

- Feeling tired
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Fast heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Pale skin

It is important to speak with your doctor about your child's symptoms to consider being tested for iron deficiency anemia, which involves a blood test.

Treatment for iron deficiency anemia can include iron supplements given either orally (by mouth) or intravenously (through an IV). Commonly used oral iron supplements include ferrous sulfate and Novaferum®. It is best to take oral iron between meals or with a source of vitamin C, such as fresh juice, melons, or citrus fruits to help the body take in the iron. Do not add iron to milk because calcium prevents the body from taking in iron. Between the ages of 1 and 5 years, it is best to limit milk intake to 24 ounces or less per day. Sometimes oral iron can cause an upset stomach. If this occurs, it helps to take oral iron one hour after a meal. Other times, it is best for a child to receive IV iron, and your doctor will discuss this option with your family.

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It is also important to encourage your child to eat iron-rich foods from plants and animals, including:

- Chicken
- Fish
- Leafy greens, such as: broccoli, kale and collard greens
- Grains, such as: whole wheat bread and cream of wheat
- Iron-enriched bread, pasta, rice and cereals
- Legumes, such as: lima beans and green peas
- Dry beans and peas, such as: pinto beans, black-eyed peas and canned baked beans
- Red meat (may increase bowel inflammation; should be limited to once or twice a month)

Food	Serving size	Milligrams of iron
Chicken	½ chicken breast, bone and skin removed	1
Turkey	3 ounces, roasted	1
Shrimp	8 shrimp, cooked	1.3
Eggs	1 whole egg	1
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons	1
Lentils	½ cup, cooked	3
Beans:		
White beans	½ cup	8
Navy beans	½ cup	5
Kidney beans	½ cup	2
Chickpeas	½ cup	2
Black beans	½ cup	2
Fortified grains:		
Dry cereal, wheat	1 cup	4
Oatmeal	1 cup, cooked	1.7
Bread, white or wheat	1 slice	6
Quinoa	½ cup cooked	1
Potatoes	1 medium potato, baked with skin	3
Tomatoes	½ cup canned, stewed	2
Spinach	½ cup, cooked	3
Beef	3 ounces	2