

Idaho Falls Pediatrics

Iron Deficiency Anemia

What is iron deficiency anemia?

Anemia means that the number of red blood cells in your child's body is below normal. The red blood cells carry oxygen in the bloodstream, and iron is needed for your child's body to produce red blood cells. Iron deficiency anemia is caused by a child not getting enough iron from his or her diet.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Iron medicines**

Your child's medicine is _____. Your child's dose is _____ ml or cc, given _____ times a day for _____ weeks.

This medicine contains iron and will need to be taken for 2 to 3 months to get your child's red blood cells back to a normal level. It can occasionally cause an upset stomach and should be taken with food to prevent this. Mix the iron medicine with a juice containing Vitamin C (orange juice, for example). This will improve iron absorption and prevent staining of the teeth. Do not give iron with milk or formula because they reduce absorption. (NOTE: If the teeth become stained, the stain can be brushed off with baking soda.) The iron may change the color of bowel movements to greenish black, but this is harmless. Too much iron can be dangerous and can cause serious poisoning. Treat iron like any medicine: Keep it out of your child's reach.

- **Iron-Rich Diet**

If your child's diet is well-balanced, he or she won't get anemia again. The following foods contain iron:

- Meats, fish, and poultry have the most iron.
- Raisins, dried fruits, sweet potatoes, lima beans, kidney beans, chili beans, pinto beans, green peas, peanut butter, enriched cereals, and breads are other iron-rich foods. Spinach and egg yolks also contain iron, but it is in a form that is not readily available to the body to absorb.

Your child should not drink more than 24 ounces of milk a day (about 3 glasses) so that he or she has an adequate appetite for solid iron-containing foods. Milk doesn't contain any iron.

- **Follow-up visits**

Your health care provider needs to see your child in 1 week and again in 2 months to be sure the level of red blood cells in the blood has returned to normal.

When should I call Idaho Falls Pediatrics?

Call during office hours if:

- Your child refuses the iron medicine.
- You have other concerns or questions.

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.