



Symptoms of Iron Deficiency or Anemia in Children

This checklist is to help identify the symptoms of iron deficiency. Make note of any symptoms of iron deficiency or the risk factors that apply to your child. Bring this checklist to your doctor.

Symptoms and their severity can vary from child to child; some children may only have one to two symptoms or even be symptom-free (also called asymptomatic). Work with your health care practitioner to investigate.

Possible Symptoms:

- Dark under-eye circles
- Pale lining of eyelids
- Pale skin, or lips
- Behavioural changes
- Moodiness, tantrums
- Reduced immunity—reoccurring flus, colds, and infections
- Craving ice, dirt, or clay (pica)
- Stunted height and growth
- In infants slow weight gain, failure to thrive
- Muscle weakness, reduced physical stamina, tires easily
- Poor motor skills, slow to learn new physical tasks like crawling
- Difficulty concentrating and learning
- Sleep issues, tiredness
- Cold hands and feet
- Dizziness, fast heartbeat, rapid breathing
- Grinding teeth
- Thin, brittle, curved nails

Risk Factors:

- Born to a mother with iron deficiency or iron deficiency anemia
- Premature birth
- Low birthweight
- Blood loss during birth
- Being a twin or triplet
- Being born less than 24 months after older sibling
- Being the last born of many children
- Formula fed with a 'low-iron' formula
- Being exclusively breastfed past six months of age (no solid food introduction until after 6 months of age)
- Consuming cow or goat milk before 12 months of age
- Drinking more than 2 cups of milk per day
- Digestive conditions such as Crohn's disease, Celiac disease, or ulcerative colitis
- Picky eater, vegan, or vegetarian
- Girls that have begun menstruation
- Highly active children (sports)

Iron Testing

If or when you take your child for an iron blood test, be sure that ferritin levels are tested along with hemoglobin. Also request a copy of the test results. Many doctors will advise that the test results are normal because they are within the normal reference range; however, current reference ranges are too broad and can vary between laboratories leaving children with undiagnosed iron-related health issues. Remember that your child's health will be impacted long before iron deficiency anemia is diagnosed. Iron is so important to growth and development that children with 2 or more risk factors should supplement daily with iron to help prevent iron deficiency.