

## Importance of iron for toddler development

In Ireland up to 50% of 2 year olds are iron deficient and nearly 10% have full blown iron deficiency anaemia<sup>1</sup>. For this reason it is important for toddlers to eat iron rich foods in order to meet their RDA\* for iron.

### Did you know...

Toddlers require the same amounts of iron as a 30 year old man<sup>2</sup>. Therefore meeting a toddlers iron requirements can be difficult to achieve.

Over consumption of cow's milk can reduce toddlers' intake of iron rich foods<sup>1</sup>.

1 in 4 toddlers are drinking between 600mls and 1 litre of cow's milk daily, that's the equivalent of an adult drinking 6 litres of cow's milk every day<sup>3</sup>.

### So why is iron so important in the first 3 years of life?

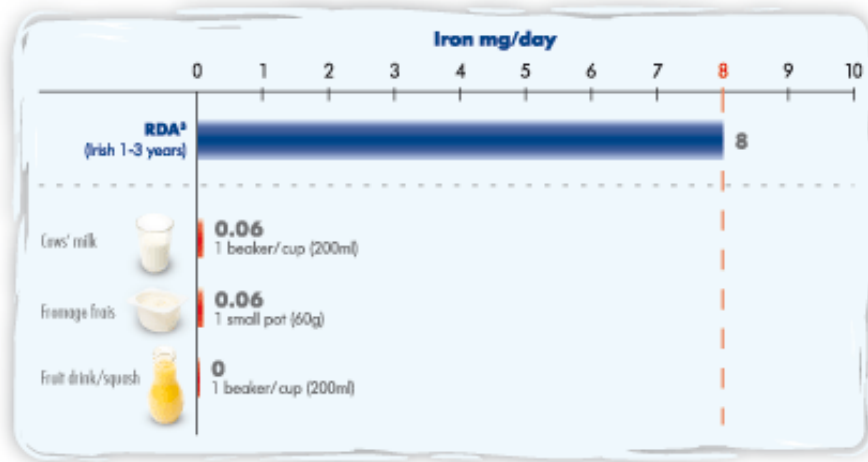
1. The toddlers' brain goes through a period of rapid growth and development<sup>4</sup>.
2. Meeting toddlers iron requirements ensures optimum behavioural and intellectual development<sup>5</sup>.
3. Iron deficiency anaemia in early childhood is associated with significantly poorer school performance at age 11-14 years<sup>6</sup>.

Foods have differing levels of iron; below you will see both good and poor sources of iron and how close they are to meeting the RDA for iron.

### Good Sources of iron



## Poor Sources of Iron



## References

1. Freeman VE et al. *Public Health Nutr.* 1998; 1(2): 93-100.#
2. Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Recommended Dietary Allowances for Ireland 1999.
3. C&G U&A Survey 2006. For a sample of Irish toddlers aged 12-36 months.
4. Tayler et al. The Brain, Development and Learning in Early Childhood. In: Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science; CERl OECD publishing 2007 [online].
5. Martins S et al. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2001, Issue 2.
6. Lozoff B et al. *Pediatrics* 2000; 105 (4): E51.