

Meat, Eggs & Beans



What do all these foods have in common?

They all belong to one food group that 2-5 year olds should be having one serving of each day. These foods provide significant amounts of protein in our diet as well as vitamins and minerals.

First foods

Around 6 months of age, cooked pureed lean meat, pork, chicken (without the skin), fish, lentils and legumes can be introduced to infants. Cooked egg is appropriate from around 7 months, while different types of seafood can be introduced to babies from 8 months.

Iron

The lean meats, poultry and seafood are foods that contain the most readily absorbed form of iron. Iron is an essential mineral for both physical and mental development. It is found in two different forms; haem iron is found in meat, fish and poultry; non-haem iron is found in plant food such as dried peas, beans and lentils. Iron absorption from plant foods can be increased by consuming a vitamin C rich food at the same meal. For example, when eating falafels, iron from the chickpeas is made more readily absorbed by the vitamin C from the fresh salad eaten with the falafel. Other good fruit and vegetables sources of vitamin C include tomatoes, capsicum, broccoli, cauliflower, kiwifruit, berries, melon, and oranges.



Low cost options

Dried peas, beans and lentils are very economical ingredients for a main meal, especially if you soak and cook them yourself; these meals just need a little planning in advance. These can also be added to meat meals to make it stretch further.

Chewing

Meat is a food that some toddlers decide to take a dislike to. It often seems to be related to the chewy texture of some meats. The key is to ensure that while meats are cooked completely, especially chicken, that they are not overcooked. Overcooking can cause drying out and toughening of the food. Lean minced meat is often well accepted, for example dishes like homemade hamburgers or mini-meat balls.

Try not to make food refusal a big issue at mealtime, encourage tastes of a new or rejected food, it may take a small child up to 10 tastes of a new food for it to be accepted. Eating with an adult or peer role models can help.

