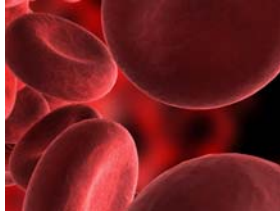


What is anemia?



"Anemia" occurs when you have less than the normal number of red blood cells in your blood or when the red blood cells in your blood don't have enough hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is a protein which gives the red color to your blood. Its main job is to carry oxygen from your lungs to all parts of your body. If you have anemia, your blood does not carry enough oxygen to all the parts of your body. Without oxygen, your organs and tissues cannot work as well as they should.

Anemia happens when:

1. the body loses too much blood (such as with heavy periods, certain diseases, and trauma); or
2. the body has problems making red blood cells; or
3. red blood cells break down or die faster than the body can replace them with new ones; or
4. more than one of these problems happen at the same time.

What are the signs of anemia?

Anemia takes some time to develop. In the beginning, you may not have any signs or they may be mild. But as it gets worse, you may have these symptoms:

- * fatigue (very common)
- * weakness (very common)
- * dizziness
- * headache
- * numbness or coldness in your hands and feet
- * low body temperature
- * pale skin
- * rapid or irregular heartbeat
- * shortness of breath
- * chest pain
- * irritability
- * not doing well at work or in school

All of these signs and symptoms can occur because your heart has to work harder to pump more oxygen-rich blood through the body.

How do I find out if I have anemia?

Your doctor can tell if you have anemia by a blood test called a CBC (Complete Blood Count). If you have anemia, your doctor may want to do other tests to find out what's causing it.

What does your Haemoglobin value mean?

The World Health Organization's criterion for anemia in Adults is Hb < 12.5 g/dL.

Children aged 6 months to 6 years Hb < 11 g/dL,

Children aged 6-14 years Hb < 12 g/dL.

How do I prevent anemia?

There are steps you can take to help prevent some types of anemia.

- Eat foods high in iron:
- cereal/breads with iron in it
- liver
- lentils and beans
- oysters
- tofu
- green, leafy vegetables such as spinach
- red meat (lean only)
- fish
- dried fruits such as apricots, prunes, and raisins



* Eat and drink foods that help your body absorb iron, like orange juice, strawberries, broccoli, or other fruits and vegetables with vitamin C.

* Don't drink coffee or tea with meals. These drinks make it harder for your body to absorb iron.

* Calcium can hurt your absorption of iron.

* Make sure you consume enough folic acid and vitamin B12.

* Make balanced food choices. Most people who make healthy, balanced food choices get the iron and vitamins their bodies need from the foods they eat. Food fads and dieting can lead to anemia.

I am a vegetarian. What steps should I take to make sure I get enough iron?

It depends on the food choices you make. Since meat, poultry, and seafood are the best sources of iron found in food, some vegetarians may need to take a higher

amount of iron each day than what is recommended for other people. Follow the tips above to prevent anemia, and try to take vitamin C with the iron-rich foods you eat



Prevalence of Anemia in India



The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), conducted in 2005-06, report shows that the prevalence of anemia in children in India is as high as 79 per cent.

In Uttar Pradesh alone, 85 per cent of children under the age of three years suffer from deficiency of iron, a leap of 11.3 per cent from the figures in NFHS 2, conducted in 1998-99. But women within the age group of 25 to 49 suffer the most. According to WHO estimates, India is one of the countries in the world that has highest prevalence of anemia.