

Anemia

Anemia means that your body does not have enough healthy red blood cells. Red blood cells (RBC) transport oxygen to all the body tissues. A protein called Hgb allows your RBC's to absorb and release oxygen. Without enough RBC's or Hgb, your body doesn't get enough oxygen. Symptoms of anemia may then occur.

Some symptoms of anemia:

- Headache
- Extreme weakness and tiredness
- Loss of concentration- hard to finish tasks
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heartbeat/pulse
- Unclear thinking – mental fatigue, confusion, forgetfulness
- Dizziness or faintness
- Pale skin, lips, gums, fingernail beds, or palms of hands
- Difficulty sleeping

Some causes of anemia:

- Loss of blood due to injury, surgery, childbirth, or even heavy menstrual periods
- Your body does not make enough RBC
- Your body is not replacing RBC's faster than they're being destroyed
- Low in certain nutrients such as Iron, Folate, or Vitamin B-12
- Certain chronic infections and diseases such as tuberculosis or HIV
- Some medications, such as chemotherapy drugs, that affect the bone marrow (when stopped or held, blood counts may improve)
- Radiation that affects the bone marrow where red blood cells are formed

For more information on Anemia and how it is diagnosed, ask your health care team for the Anemia handout, "How is Anemia Diagnosed."

Anemia may be mild enough that no treatment is needed and will get better when the disease or cause is successfully treated. Diet changes may be all that is needed such as supplementing vitamins. Medication can help treat, build new RBC's, or ease symptoms.

Anemia is rarely severe enough to require a blood transfusion. Bone Marrow Biopsies can be used to determine the underlying cause of the anemia

For Helpful hints for treating anemia – see *FATIGUE*.