

# Anemia

Anemia is a lower than normal red blood cell count. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of the body. When there is a low number of red blood cells, less oxygen is getting to the parts of the body. This can make a person feel tired and weak.

## Causes

- Problems with how iron and other foods are used by the body
- Not eating enough iron-rich foods
- Bleeding in the mouth, esophagus, stomach or intestines
- Vaginal bleeding or heavy menstrual flow
- Babies less than one year old who drink cow's or goat's milk
- Babies who are fed formula that does not have extra iron.

## Signs

If you have any of these signs, talk to your doctor.

- Feeling weak or tired
- Pale skin, lips, gums, lining of eyes, nails or palms of hands
- Trouble thinking clearly or feeling confused
- Dizziness or faintness
- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- Rapid heart beat
- Babies and children may grow too slowly

## Your Care

Your doctor will do tests to find the cause of your anemia and to plan your treatment. Your treatment may include:

- Eating healthy meals that include fruits, vegetables, breads, dairy products, meat and fish. Eat iron-rich foods such as leafy vegetables, red meats, nuts and beans. Your doctor may want you to meet with a dietitian to plan healthy meals.
- Taking an iron supplement.
- Drinking 6-8 glasses of liquids each day.
- Getting a transfusion to replace iron and blood that you have lost.

Call your doctor **right away** if you:

- Are too dizzy to stand up
- Have shortness of breath

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**