

Anemia

Anemia occurs when you have too few healthy red blood cells or when your red blood cells have too little hemoglobin (a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen to tissues and cells). It may be caused by:

- A deficiency of iron, folate, or vitamin B-12 (that is, having too little of one of these nutrients in your blood)
- Some types of cancer
- Some cancer treatments

What Are the Symptoms of Anemia?

Symptoms of anemia may include:

- Tiredness
- Pale skin
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Cold hands and feet
- Headache

It is also possible to have no symptoms of anemia but still have anemia.

What Can I Do If I Have Anemia?

Your health care team will discuss the correct treatment for the type of anemia you have. If you have an iron, folate, or vitamin B-12 deficiency, this treatment may include eating more foods that are rich in these nutrients.

The chart on the right lists some common foods that provide iron, folate, and vitamin B-12. The chart also includes foods rich in vitamin C because eating foods with vitamin C along with iron-containing foods helps our bodies absorb iron better.

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Foods Rich in Nutrients That May Help Prevent Anemia

Nutrient	Food Choices
Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beef and other meats• Beans and lentils• Iron-fortified cereals• Dark-green leafy vegetables• Dried fruits• Peanut butter
Folate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citrus juices and citrus fruits• Bananas• Dark-green leafy vegetables• Legumes (beans, lentils, peanuts)• Enriched breads, cereals, and pasta
Vitamin B-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meat• Milk and dairy foods
Vitamin C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citrus fruits, melons, berries• Peppers, broccoli, tomatoes• Juices made from fruits and vegetables that are high in vitamin