

Anaemia

Health Condition Factsheet Released March 2020

What is it?

Anaemia is when your body does not have enough healthy red blood cells. This reduces the oxygen flow in the body. One of the most common symptoms of anaemia is fatigue. Anaemia can also cause shortness of breath, headaches, dizziness and a racing heartbeat.

Anaemia can occur when your body:

- **Doesn't create enough red blood cells** - this is called **iron deficiency anaemia**
- **Loses a lot of blood** - such as from heavy periods or bleeding from the stomach or bowel
- **Your body destroys its red blood cells** - this is caused by genetic conditions and autoimmune conditions

Your treatment will depend on what is causing your anaemia. Treatment can be simple, like taking an iron tablet. But, some people might need a more detailed treatment plan.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP may take tests to find the reason why you have anaemia. Your GP will talk to you about your medical history, medications, diet, stomach symptoms and your period patterns if you are female.

Your GP may also take blood and urine tests. Based on the tests and information you tell your GP, they may recommend a treatment plan or refer you to a specialist.

Your GP will continue to track your condition with regular blood tests. Your treatment depends on the cause of your anaemia. It may be short term (three to six months) or lifelong. If your anaemia doesn't improve with treatment, your GP may refer you to a blood specialist (haematologist).

What can I do?

Follow your treatment plan. Tell your GP if you notice any new symptoms or begin to feel unwell.

Anaemia and surgery

Tell your GP if you plan to have any type of surgery, including dental surgery

Increasing your iron levels before surgery reduces the risk that you will need a blood transfusion during or after surgery

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What symptoms should I look out for?
- Do I need to take any medication?
- How long will I have anaemia for?
- Do I need to take an iron supplement?



What supports are available?

South Western Sydney Local Health District Haematology Service runs clinics at Bankstown, Bowral, Campbelltown and Liverpool Hospitals. Your GP can refer you to the nearest clinic if needed.

Your GP may refer you to a private specialist for further assessment and treatment.

Where can I find more information?

- Better Health Channel – anaemia: betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- healthdirect – anaemia: healthdirect.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs