

# Anemia

Anemia is a medical condition in which there is not enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen to the tissues in the body. When the tissues don't receive enough oxygen then many of the organs and their functions are affected.

Anemia is especially worrisome in pregnancy because it is associated with low birth weight, premature birth, and maternal mortality.

When you are pregnant you are at a higher risk of developing anemia due to the excess amount of blood that the body produces to help provide nutrients for the baby. Anemia can be mild and easily treated if found early. For those cases that go untreated, however, can be dangerous to both mother and baby.

## Types of Anemia

The most common types of anemia that pregnant women experience are iron-deficiency anemia, folate-deficiency anemia, and vitamin B12 deficiency anemia.

**Iron-Deficiency Anemia:** This type of anemia occurs in approximately 15%-25% of all pregnancies. Iron is a mineral that's used to carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body and helps the muscles store and use oxygen.

**Folate-Deficiency Anemia:** Folate is the vitamin that is found in leafy green vegetables and whole grains. In a vitamin it is referred to as folic acid and is responsible for reducing the risk of neural tube defects in the baby.

**Vitamin B12 Deficiency Anemia:** Vitamin B12 is responsible for helping with the production of red blood cells. Some women may consume enough of the vitamin in their diet, but their body may be incapable of processing it which causes them to have a deficiency.

Some of the common causes of anemia are heavy bleeding during menstruation, an ulcer or polyp, or blood donation causes red blood cells to be destroyed faster than they can be replenished.



# Symptoms

- Weakness or fatigue
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
  - Chest pain
- Pale skin, lips, and nails
  - Cold hands and feet
- Trouble concentrating

# Treatment

In mild cases it can simply be treated by taking an iron supplement or other specific vitamin supplement. This is usually all you need in order to rid of the effects of anemia, although in rare cases women with severe anemia may need a blood transfusion. Talk with your doctor about which supplements might be necessary for you.

# Preventing Anemia

A simple change to your diet can help prevent the chances of anemia. It is recommended that pregnant women consume 30mg of iron each day.

Some iron-rich foods are:

- Lean red meats and poultry
  - Eggs
- Dark leafy green vegetables
  - Nuts and seeds
  - Beans and lentils
  - Tofu

