

## Iron Deficiency Anemia

### What is Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Iron deficiency anemia happens when your body doesn't have enough iron. Iron is important because it helps your body make red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen all over your body. Without enough iron, your body can't make enough healthy red blood cells.

### What Causes Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Some common causes are:

Not eating enough iron-rich foods

Losing blood from injuries, heavy periods, or stomach problems

Your body not absorbing enough iron from food

Pregnancy or growth spurts when your body needs more iron

### What Are the Symptoms?

You might notice:

Feeling very tired or weak

Pale skin

Shortness of breath, especially when moving or exercising

Dizziness or headache

Fast or irregular heartbeat

Cold hands and feet

Craving unusual things like ice or dirt (called pica)

### When Should You Call Your Home Health Nurse or Doctor?

Call your nurse or doctor if you:

Feel more tired than usual

Notice your skin or inside your mouth looks pale

Have dizziness or headaches that don't go away

Have cold hands or feet often

Feel your heart beating fast or skipping beats

Start bleeding more than usual (nosebleeds, heavy periods)

### When Should You Go to the Emergency Room?

Go to the ER right away if you:

Have chest pain or trouble breathing

Feel faint or pass out

Have severe bleeding that won't stop

Have a very fast or irregular heartbeat that doesn't go away

### How Can You Prevent Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Eat foods high in iron, like meat, beans, spinach, and fortified cereals

Eat vitamin C-rich foods (like oranges or strawberries) with iron foods to help your body absorb iron better

Avoid drinking too much tea or coffee with meals because they can reduce iron absorption

Follow your doctor's advice if you need iron supplements

### Other Important Information

Taking iron supplements can cause stomach upset; take them with food if needed but not with milk or antacids

Keep all your doctor appointments and have blood tests as recommended

Let your doctor know if you have any side effects from your medicine or if symptoms get worse

Remember: Iron deficiency anemia can be treated successfully with good care. Pay attention to your body and ask for help when you need it.

## **Patient Homework/Assessment**

True or False: Iron helps your body make red blood cells.

True or False: Iron deficiency anemia means your body has too much iron.

True or False: Not eating enough iron-rich foods can cause iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: Heavy periods can lead to iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: Feeling very tired is a symptom of iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: Pale skin can be a sign of iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: Dizziness and headaches are never related to anemia.

True or False: Craving ice or dirt is a possible symptom of iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: You should call your doctor if you have a fast or irregular heartbeat.

True or False: Chest pain and trouble breathing mean you should go to the emergency room right away.

True or False: Drinking tea or coffee with meals helps your body absorb iron better.

True or False: Eating foods rich in vitamin C helps your body absorb iron.

True or False: Iron supplements can sometimes upset your stomach.

True or False: You don't need to take iron supplements if your doctor prescribes them.

True or False: Iron deficiency anemia can be prevented by eating iron-rich foods.

True or False: Severe bleeding that won't stop is a reason to go to the ER.

True or False: Cold hands and feet can be a symptom of iron deficiency anemia.

True or False: You should ignore feeling very tired because it's not related to anemia.

True or False: You should keep all your doctor appointments to manage anemia.

True or False: Iron deficiency anemia can be successfully treated with proper care.

## **ASSESSMENT of WELL-BEING INDIVIDUALIZED PATIENT HOMEWORK**

**Can you tell me what foods you are eating at home that are high in iron, such as leafy greens, beans, or red meat?**

**When did you last have your hemoglobin and hematocrit checked, and do you remember the results?**

**Are you taking your iron supplement as prescribed, and do you know the best way to take it so your body absorbs it well (for example, with vitamin C and not with milk)?**

**Have you noticed any changes such as fatigue, shortness of breath, or dizziness since starting your treatment?**

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