

# PATIENT BLOOD MANAGEMENT: ANEMIA AND PREGNANCY



## What is anemia?

Anemia means you have low iron in your blood or "low blood." Iron helps your red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of your body.

## What are the symptoms of anemia?

Anemia can make you feel very tired and have "low energy". You may feel light-headed or dizzy and may "black out."

## How does anemia affect your baby?

Your baby depends on you for oxygen. If you have severe anemia, your baby may not get enough oxygen to grow well. The baby may be small at birth. Anemia may increase the chance that you will give birth early. If you have anemia and bleed heavily after the birth, you may need a blood transfusion.

## What treatment is available?

To treat anemia, you need to replace the iron in your body. It is important that you and your doctor work together to treat anemia.

### Some tips for treating anemia include:

- Take vitamins and iron pills every day as your doctor tells you.
- Do not take iron pills with milk. The calcium in the milk does not let the iron work well in your body.
- Take your iron pill with juices that have vitamin C in them. Some examples are orange juice and tomato juice. This helps the iron get into your blood better.
- Do not take antacids like Tums® or Maalox® at the same time that you take iron pills. These can affect how your body uses the iron pills.

Iron pills can cause problems with having a bowel movement. Eat more foods with fiber, such as fruits, vegetables, and cereals. Drink six to eight glasses of water or juice daily.

Your bowel movements may turn dark black. This is normal.

### Eating foods that are high in iron is very important.

#### Foods that help increase your iron level are:

- Red meats, like beef and pork
- Liver
- Black molasses
- Peanut butter
- Nuts, like almonds and cashews
- Beans
- Dried fruits, like prunes, apricots, figs, raisins, peaches, and dates
- Egg yolks
- Sweet potatoes
- Dark green or yellow vegetables, such as collard greens, kale, spinach, turnips, and mustard greens
- Raisin bran cereal and wheat germ

Eating right and taking iron and vitamins will help keep you and your baby healthy.

Contact the coordinators at The Center for Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at UPMC by calling **1-877-674-7111**, or visit [www.bloodlesscenter.com](http://www.bloodlesscenter.com).