

# PATIENT BLOOD MANAGEMENT: ANEMIA AND CANCER

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy can cause anemia, a condition that deprives your body's tissues of oxygen and leaves you feeling tired.

## What is anemia?

Anemia is a condition that occurs when your red blood cell count is below normal. Red blood cells carry oxygen from your lungs to all parts of your body. When your red blood cell count is low, body tissues do not get the oxygen they need to work properly.

## What are the signs of anemia?

Anemia can make you feel tired and weak, and appear pale.

## How does cancer lead to anemia?

Sometimes, anemia is a result of chemotherapy or radiation therapy. These treatments for cancer can slow down the body's natural ability to make red blood cells. There are other causes of anemia, including certain cancers of the bone marrow.

In some cases, your body recovers from anemia on its own. In other cases, your doctor may prescribe a blood transfusion to build up your red blood cell count. Discuss your blood transfusion preferences with your doctor if you become anemic.

## Some tips for dealing with anemia:

- Rest when you are tired.
- Set up a regular sleep schedule and stick to it.
- Take one or two short naps during the daytime, 30 to 40 minutes each.
- Ask family and friends to help you with chores.
- Take it slow when doing any activity.



- If you feel dizzy, lie flat for a few minutes, then get up slowly.
- Get help when walking, if needed.
- Drink water or nutritious beverages.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. This should include foods with protein, vitamins, and iron.
- Try eating three small meals a day, then snacking on healthy foods in between.
- Talk to your doctor before taking any vitamin tablets, iron pills, or other supplements.

**For more information, contact the UPMC Center for Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at 1-877-674-7111.**