

Anemia (Low red blood cell count) in cancer treatment

Where can I get more information?

Urgent care unit (UCU) open 24hrs contact no
44397277/44397179

You can visit the Patient Information Center
available from Sunday to Thursday
Contact no (44397530) from 7 am to 3 pm



Anemia (Low red blood cell count) in cancer treatment

Anemia is when you have too few red blood cells and the tissues in your body don't get enough oxygen to do their work.

How will I know if I have anemia?

The only way is to have a blood test to identify a low blood cell count, also called anemia. Your doctor will check your blood cell count by doing a test called a complete blood count or CBC. This will often be done during your treatment.

What causes anemia?

- Chronic diseases like thalassemia, iron deficiency anemia and certain cancers may cause anemia
- Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, biotherapy, stem cell transplant and surgery may cause anemia
- Poor diet
- Infections
- Renal problems (kidney diseases)

What are the symptoms of anemia?

- Extreme tiredness (fatigue), weakness
- Headaches and irritability
- Dizziness or fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Pale skin
- Racing heart beat
- A tendency to feel cold
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty sleeping and concentrating

What can I do if I know my red blood cell count is low?

- Maintain a balance between rest and activities
- Plan your important activities when you have the most energy
- Get plenty of sleep/save your energy between activities
- Move slowly to avoid getting dizzy
- When getting up from the lying position, sit up for a few minutes before standing
- Eat a balanced diet that includes protein (such as fish, meat, eggs, cheese, milk, nuts, peas and beans)
- Eat a diet high in vitamin C such as citrus fruits and juices, this can help your body absorb iron
- Limit coffee and tea at mealtimes so as not to decrease iron absorption
- Drink eight to ten glasses of water a day, unless you are given other instructions. It's okay to drink other liquids instead of water – just not beer, wine, or other alcoholic drinks
- Take medication as prescribed from your doctor
- Take an iron supplement with vitamin C supplement or eat a diet rich in vitamin C

***If your red blood cell count falls too low, you may need a blood transfusion**