

WHAT IS ANEMIA?

Anemia occurs when the amount of hemoglobin, a protein-iron compound found in all blood types, drops below normal. Hemoglobin enables red blood cells to transport oxygen throughout the body.

While symptoms can vary, anemia is most often associated with extreme fatigue and/or low energy. There are many forms of anemia, but the most common ones derive from iron and vitamin deficiencies.

WHAT CAUSES ANEMIA?

Iron deficiency generally results from either bleeding or inadequate diet. Heavy menstrual periods can account for iron deficiencies in women. In older women and men, iron deficiencies are often related to diseases of the intestines. Children and pregnant women, whose bodies normally require higher levels of iron, may become iron deficient as a result of not having enough iron in their diets.

Vitamin B12 deficiency is less common than iron deficiency and is usually caused by pernicious anemia, a disease that causes the body to stop absorbing Vitamin B12 from the diet. Vitamin B12, like folic acid, is necessary for normal blood production.

Folic Acid deficiency is generally caused by a dietary deficiency and is most commonly found in pregnant women, whose bodies require higher-than-normal levels of folic acid. Folic acid is essential to the proper development of a baby's nervous system.

WHAT CAN A BLOOD TEST TELL ME ABOUT ANEMIA?

Blood tests most commonly used to identify anemia include a CBC (complete blood count), iron and TIBC (total iron binding capacity) tests. A CBC evaluates the kinds and numbers of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets in the blood.

Iron and TIBC tests are a group of tests that evaluate the iron level in blood serum, and the body's capacity to absorb iron. Abnormal results from blood tests can indicate the presence of a variety of conditions, including anemias, sometimes before the patient experiences symptoms of the disease.

Many forms of anemia, including iron and folic acid deficiencies, can be treated with supplements and/or changes in diet.

*For more information regarding the services provided by the Pathology Center,
call (402) 354-4541 or (888) 432-8980.*

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