Anemia - Nonspecific

Your exam and blood tests show you are anemic. This means your blood (*hemoglobin*) level is low. Normal hemoglobin values are 12-15 for females and 14-17 for males. The hematocrit percent is also used to measure anemia. A normal hematocrit is 38-46 in females and 42-49 in males. Make a note of your hematocrit level today.

SYMPTOMS

Anemia can come on suddenly (*acute*). It can also come on slowly (*chronic*). Symptoms can include:

- Minor weakness.
- Dizziness.
- Palpitations.
- Shortness of breath.

Symptoms may be absent until half your hemoglobin is missing if it comes on slowly. Anemia due to acute blood loss from an injury or internal bleeding may require blood transfusion if the loss is severe. Hospital care is needed if you are anemic and there is significant continued blood loss.

CAUSES

Anemia can be due to many different causes.

- Excessive bleeding from periods is a common problem in women.

Other causes can include:

- Intestinal bleeding.
- Poor nutrition.
- Kidney, thyroid, liver, and bone marrow diseases.

TREATMENT

- Stool tests for blood (*Hemoccult*) and additional lab tests are often needed. This determines the best treatment.
- Further checking on your condition and your response to treatment is very important. It often takes many weeks to correct anemia.

Depending on the cause, treatment can include:

- Supplements of iron.
- Vitamins B12 and folic acid.
- Hormone medicines.

If your anemia is due to bleeding, finding the cause of the blood loss is very important. This will help avoid further problems.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop fainting, extreme weakness, shortness of breath, or chest pain.
- You develop heavy vaginal bleeding.
- You develop bloody or black, tarry stools or vomit up blood.
- You develop a high fever, rash, repeated vomiting, or dehydration.

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