Anemia
(Iron Deficiency)

Hemoglobin is the protein in your blood that carries oxygen. You are anemic if this protein becomes too low. The most common cause of anemia is iron deficiency. It is important to treat anemia because it can make you less able to physically and/or emotionally cope with stress. It also decreases your body's response to infection.

There are many types of anemia and different types of evaluation are required. If you have a family history of anemia, discuss this with your caregiver. If your family history includes inherited (*genetic*) anemia (such as sickle-cell anemia), you and your partner may want to be tested and receive genetic counseling.

CAUSES
- Pregnancy.
- Blood loss.
- Increased blood destruction.
- Simply not making enough blood.

SYMPTOMS
- Usually, low red blood cells (*mild anemia*) may not be noticeable.
- If your anemia becomes more severe, you will feel more fatigued, breathless, and will not be able to exercise. You may also experience fainting or have strong, quick heartbeats you can feel (*palpitations*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS
- Your dietitian can help you with your diet questions.
- Take iron and vitamins as directed by your caregiver.
- Eat a diet rich in iron. Eat liver, beef, whole-grain bread, eggs, and dried fruit.
- Eating foods rich in vitamin C along with foods containing iron will help the stomach absorb more iron.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:
- You have a fainting episode. **Do not drive yourself. Call your local emergency services (911 in U.S.)** if no other help is available.
- You have chest pain, feel sick to your stomach (*nauseous*), or throw up (*vomit*).
- You develop severe or increased shortness of breath with activities.
- You develop weakness or increased thirst.
- You have a rapid pulse and heartbeat.
- You develop unexplained sweating or become lightheaded when getting up from bed or a chair.

MAKE SURE YOU:
- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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