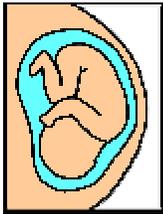


Anemia During Pregnancy

What is Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Iron deficiency anemia occurs when there is not enough iron in the blood. Iron is an important building block for hemoglobin, the part of red blood cells that carries oxygen.



In pregnancy, the amount of blood in the body must increase by almost 50% to feed the growing baby. As a result, the mother's body starts to make blood at a faster pace. Sometimes the need for iron is greater than the amount stored in the body. The result is iron deficiency anemia. Approximately 20% of pregnant women have anemia.

How Will I Know if I am Anemic?

Most of the time women don't know they are anemic. Because anemia is so common, doctors and midwives usually check the blood for anemia during the first prenatal visit. Sometimes they will repeat the test at about 28 weeks of pregnancy, or whenever there is a concern that the woman may be anemic.



The most common symptom of anemia is excessive tiredness. If anemia is severe, women may also experience dizziness, fainting, fast or irregular heartbeat, pale skin or shortness of breath.

How is Anemia Treated?

Anemia caused by lack of iron is usually treated with iron tablets. If your doctor or midwife prescribes iron, take it with food to prevent nausea. Avoid taking iron with milk because the calcium prevents it from being used by your body. On the other hand, taking your iron pill with orange juice (or another source of vitamin C) will help it be absorbed more easily.



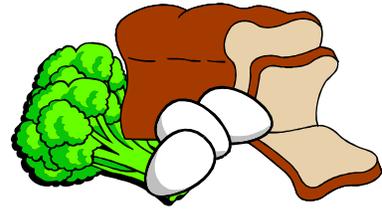
Sometimes the iron tablets can make your bowel movements dark-colored or even black. This color is from extra iron that was not absorbed in your body. It is not dangerous. Iron may also

cause constipation or diarrhea. Talk with your doctor or midwife if this is a problem for you.

What Can I Do to Prevent Anemia?

The best sources of iron are the foods you eat. By eating foods that are high in iron and vitamin C, you may be able to prevent anemia. Some iron-rich foods are:

- Red meats
- Liver
- Dried beans or tofu
- Dried fruits (raisins, prunes, apricots)
- Leafy green vegetables (broccoli, spinach)
- Iron-enriched bread, pasta, and cereal
- Eggs



**Produced by the Utah Department of Health,
Reproductive Health Program.**

If you have further questions about anemia, contact your doctor or midwife. This pamphlet is for informational purposes only, and should not replace the advice of your care provider.