

National Cancer Institute

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Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects

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Anemia

To order free copies of this fact sheet, please call 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER).

What is anemia?

Anemia is when your body doesn't have enough red blood cells. Having anemia can make you feel very tired or weak.

Call your doctor or nurse if you feel:

Dizzy or faint
Short of breath
Very weak and tired
Your heart beating very fast

Try these tips when you feel tired or weak:

Save your energy.

Choose the most important things to do each day.

Ask for help.

When family or friends offer to help, let them. They can take you to the doctor, buy groceries, or make meals.

Balance rest with activity.

Take short naps during the day. Short naps of less than 1 hour are best. Too much bed rest can make you feel weak.

Sleep at least 8 hours every night.

You may feel better if you take short walks or exercise a little every day.



"I told my doctor that I was very tired. My doctor did blood tests to check for anemia. Now I am getting treatment for the anemia, and I have a lot more energy."



Eat and drink well.

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what foods and drinks are best for you.

You may need to eat **high-protein** foods. Meat, peanut butter, and eggs are good choices.

You may need to eat foods with **iron**. Red meat, leafy greens (such as collard greens and spinach), and cooked dried beans are good choices.

Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of liquid every day. Water and juice with extra water added are good choices.



Your doctor or nurse will order blood tests. If you have anemia, you may need medicine. Or you may need a blood transfusion to help you feel better.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What is causing the anemia?
3. Would taking medicine, iron pills, or getting a blood transfusion help me?
4. Can you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods might help?

**Free Services to Learn More**

**National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service**

Phone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

Chat Online: www.cancer.gov/help

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